



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

Public Participation Networks

Handbook



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Foreword

A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a structure that brings together Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in each local authority area.

Public Participation Networks were established on foot of the report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government published in 2014, which recommended greater input by communities into decision-making at local government level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of PPNs and they are now operational in all local authority areas.

The primary purpose of the PPN is to enable the PPN member groups to input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of the local authority. The PPN is now the main way that local authorities connect with groups active in their area. Whenever the local authority needs people to participate in consultations or sit on the committees like Local Community Development Committees and Strategic Policy Committees, it is obliged to call on the PPN to select representatives from within its membership to serve on those committees. PPNs therefore provide a mechanism to facilitate the two-way flow of information between the local authority and their groups to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community.

Volunteer led organisations face many challenges as they work to enhance their communities. Another of the main roles of the PPN is to provide a space for community groups to grow and develop through various training supports. They also act as an information hub, keeping the community informed of relevant local issues, news, events, resources and supports. PPNs collaborate with a host

of organisations and service providers e.g. Education and Training Boards, Volunteer Centres or Local Development Companies to facilitate, devise and deliver support to its member organisations. The PPNs have also proven their value in times of crisis through their key role in the Community Call initiative set up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The key decision-making body of each PPN is its Plenary, which is made up of representatives of all the registered member groups of the PPN. Every PPN also has a group called a Secretariat whose members are independent of the local authority. The Secretariat's main roles is to carry out the decisions made by the Plenary and along with coordinating the activities of the PPN, ensure the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenaries.

PPNs are above politics with membership open to all volunteer-led/not for profit groups which are non-party political and that fulfil membership criteria. PPNs are wholly independent entities, but crucially still remain accountable for their use of public monies and the activities they undertake on behalf of their communities.

Since their establishment, PPNs have been funded jointly by the Department of Rural and Community Development and local authorities. This annual funding is specifically allocated to meet the cost of employing a Resource Worker and Support Worker along with their ongoing operational costs such as office accommodation and training.

Who is this Handbook for?

This Handbook was written following consultations to review the original PPN User Guide, which was published in 2016 and updated in May 2017. The Handbook gives guidance, support and, where necessary, clarity, for everyone involved with, or interested in, the PPNs. This includes:

- New and Existing Member Organisations – the Plenary
- Representatives of the PPN, Committees and Boards
- PPN Secretariats
- PPN Workers
- Elected Representatives and staff of Local Authorities
- Department of Rural and Community Development

This Handbook sets out the best practice now in place across PPNs across all 31 Local Authority areas. As the PPNs continue to grow and change with the needs of their Member Groups and communities, the Handbook will also change with those needs. And so, the Handbook will be reviewed and updated regularly.

The Handbook is designed to support the people and groups who are part of the PPN (also known as the Stakeholders) to access the information they need when they need it. Each of these groups have their own section, which means they should have all of the information they need in one place without having to go through all of the others. It might be the case that a group has a few different roles – for example a Member Group might be part of a Linkage Group, have elected a Representative and be part of the PPN. If that's the case, they'll need to know what's in a few sections of this Handbook. If that's the case, you might notice a bit of repetition. The reason for that is that different groups will need to know some of the

same information. If you're part of one group, you'll get it all together in your section. If you're part of several groups, it might be in some or all of your sections.

Another new thing about this Handbook is that it aims to set out MANDATORY areas for the PPN (the things that have to be done) as well as best practice GUIDANCE in other areas. The things that have to be done are highlighted in boxes. [!] All mandatory requirements must be followed in full. Non-compliance with these mandatory requirements may have funding implications for PPNs.

And finally, the Handbook also includes some Appendices. These have useful information and templates which have been provided by some of the PPNs themselves or have been developed by the authors of this Handbook with reference to best practices and sector norms. These templates are included as a guide only (unless otherwise stated). More templates and supports are included on the "Community Hub" section on the PPN Salesforce database.

Acknowledgements

The Department of Rural and Community Development would like to acknowledge all of those who took the time to participate in the consultation on the development of the PPN User Guide in 2019, and especially to those who provided templates. Some of these submissions included areas that, while outside the scope of the consultation for a review of the PPN User Guide, nevertheless provided useful insights and suggestions for other areas of improvement for the PPNs. These submissions will be held and considered in light of further work undertaken by the Department with the PPNs into the future.

PPN Background

Volunteers are the backbone of our communities. Volunteer-led groups and organisations make a huge contribution to society, the economy and the environment. These groups range in size and interest – from large sports groups to small choirs and residents' associations; some have a national reach and a network of local branches, while others are mainly concerned with their own community and stay local. Big or small, all have an important role to play. In fact, according to the Central Statistics Office in 2015, over 520,000 people volunteer in organisations with an equivalent annual value of over €1bn annually (based on minimum wage).

Participation by community organisations is a key aspect of PPNs. International institutions such as the EU and OECD have highlighted that the participation of citizens in public life, and their right to influence the decisions that affect them and their communities **are at the centre of democracy**.

Open and inclusive policy-making increases public participation, improves transparency and accountability, builds community capacity and leads to increased buy-in and better decision-making. The PPN structure is designed to be a **key player** in delivering this vision in Ireland.

If you want to know more about the development of the PPNs and best practice in deliberative democracy, PPNs were developed on the recommendation of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement⁴ which published its report in February 2014. This report contains a detailed review of literature and practice on the subject. Another study published in 2020 by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform⁵ outlined how PPNs have developed since they were established, noting the successes and challenges they encountered along the way and what we can learn from them.

4 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/sites/default/files/attach/civil-society-article/3393/wgcereport.pdf>

5 <https://www.ops2020.gov.ie/case-studies/public-participation-network-case-study-june-2020/>



1

Introduction



What is the PPN?

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) came about following the report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government published in 2013, which recommended that communities be given more of a say in decisions taken by local government (that is, their Local Authorities or councils). The recommended way to do this was through the PPNs, which were written into law in the Local Government Reform Act 2014. This law means that there should be a PPN in every Local Authority area.

The main reason the PPNs were set up is to enable community groups to be represented and to feed into local government decision-making in a way that is fair, clear and respectful. The PPNs have three main areas of interest, also called 'Colleges':



community and
voluntary college



social inclusion
college, and



environmental
college.

These Colleges are a collection of Member Groups that have the same interest (more information on the Colleges is set out later in this Handbook). The Colleges nominate and elect people from within their Member Groups to represent them on some of the Boards and Committees set up by the Local Authorities and other bodies. This is key to the **participation** part of the Public **Participation** Networks. This is how the voices of Member Groups are included and heard when it comes to the policy decision-making process.

The PPN is independent and “apolitical”. That means it is not under any outside influence and is not part of any political group. Although many PPNs are physically situated within the Local Authority building in their area, and some of the staff have been employed directly by that Local Authority, the work of the PPN must not be influenced by the Local Authority.

The PPNs are overseen by a National Advisory Group chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development⁶.

For the latest statistics relating to the Public Participation Networks, please refer to the Annual Report of the Public Participation Networks on the Government's website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2c4a7a-public-participation-network-annual-reports/>.

⁶ See Section 8

Principles and Values

The ethos of the PPN is very important to how it works. In doing its work, each PPN keeps to a set of six principles. This means every PPN must be:

- **Inclusive** of all volunteer-led groups in their area, and actively look to include groups that might not otherwise be included or who might not often have their voice heard.
- **Participatory**, open, welcoming, respectful, willing to work together and supportive of each other. The PPN will encourage participation by Member Groups in all of its work. There should be clear communications to and from Member Groups using as wide a range of communication methods as possible to make sure that their reach is as broad as possible. The PPN should support new Member Groups, and Member Groups who might not have a lot of experience.
- **Independent** from the Local Authority and of any special interests (the PPN must account to the Local Authority for its budget, but is independent in its work).
- **Valuing of Diversity** and recognise that the Colleges are made up of people and Member Groups that have a wide range of different views, experiences and opinions. PPNs are expected to feed into local government decision-making with the whole range of views from its Member Groups and their Colleges.
- **Transparent** in everything that it does. It should communicate openly, regularly and clearly with all Member Groups.
- **Accountable** to its Member Groups by putting good governance policies and procedures in place.

The best way to make sure that each of these principles and values is followed is to have a Flat Structure. A Flat Structure means that no single voice or group of voices controls the PPN. For more detail on what a Flat Structure is and how it should be put in place, see Section 2.



List of Acronyms / Glossary of Terms

There are a broad range of terms and definitions used when talking about PPNs and their work. Sometimes it can feel like the PPN has its own language! Some of these terms are explained below:

Advisory Group means the PPN National Advisory Group (see also **NAG** and Section 9).

Agreed Outcomes Statement means a brief summary of what has been agreed at a meeting, the outcomes of any discussion (this doesn't mean the full detail of every discussion, but outcomes should be noted) and any actions to be taken before the date of the next meeting.

Associate Members are Member Groups that don't fulfil the conditions for full membership of the PPN and cannot vote.

Colleges means the Community and Voluntary; Social Inclusion; and Environmental Colleges discussed in more detail in Section 2.

Community refers to a place (such as a neighbourhood or wider area), identity (such as belonging to an ethnic group), or interest (such as a commitment in common with others, for example, disability rights).

DoS means Director of Services (Local Authority).

Deliberative Democracy means a form of democracy and decision-making in which deliberation, active participation and discussion, is key.

The **Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government** oversees the operation and development of the local government system and provides the policy framework within which Local Authorities work and deliver services to the communities that they represent and serve. From July 2017, the policy framework regarding LCDCs, LECs and PPNs transferred from the **Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government** to the **Department of Rural and Community Development**. Article 28A of the Irish Constitution recognises the role of local government in providing a forum for the democratic representation of communities and in exercising and performing powers conferred by law.

The **Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD / the Department)** was established in July 2017 to promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. In relation to the PPNs, the Department is the majority funder, provides the Chair of the National Advisory Group and has overall responsibility for the development and oversight of the PPNs.

The Elected Council is the policy-making forum of the Local Authority; the Municipal District members make decisions that affect their Municipal District area (where Municipal Districts exist in the Local Authority area). Elected Councils (operating at Local Authority or Municipal District level) exercise 'reserved functions' (that means that only elected councillors can do these things) across a whole range of areas such as the Local Authority budget, trading, community twinning and so on. The day-to-day

management of a Local Authority is carried out by the executive, i.e. the full-time officials led by the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive has a duty to advise and assist the Elected Council in the exercise of its functions.

JPC (Joint Policing Committee) is a Local Authority Committee comprised of councillors, TDs, the Gardaí and external stakeholders such as PPNs which makes policy proposals on policing issues. Section 36 of the Garda Síochána Act provided for the establishment of JPCs in each Local Authority administrative area and as part of the Local Government structures.

LAGS The Leader Programme is administered at local level through Local Action Groups (LAGs).

LCDC: Local Community Development Committee – a Local Authority Committee with public and private members that oversees community development programmes in an area including LEADER and SICAP. An LCDC must have at least 5 members elected through the PPNs – 2 Social Inclusion, 2 Community and Voluntary; and 1 Environmental. There should also be a majority of one non-public members compared to public members. The aim of LCDCs is to develop, coordinate and implement clear and integrated approaches to local and community development.

LEADER means the funding programme delivered through the LAGS, which aims to support economic, social and environmental development of rural areas. LEADER is a programme that supports both private enterprise and community groups in delivering projects aimed at improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging the diversification of economic activity in rural areas.

LECP means the **Local Economic and Community Plan** in each economic area. The preparation of the LECP is provided for by the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The purpose of the LECP is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the local authority area. The responsibility for the LECP is shared between the LCDC and the Economics SPC.

Linkage Group: A group of PPN Member Groups with an interest in a particular issue who meet to make policy recommendations and work closely with PPN Representatives on relevant Boards or Committees, e.g. Environmental Linkage Group which works with the Climate Action SPC. These are a really important part of the PPN as they feed into the Representatives' mandate.

Local Authorities (LA): City or County Councils. These play a key role in supporting economic development and enterprise at a local level. Local Government support on the ground is critical to the success of many initiatives which drive local communities. These range from local festivals and events; design of streetscapes and village renewal schemes; support for micro-enterprises, business parks and incubation units; involvement in energy efficiency projects; promotion of rural broadband; planning for major investments in the green economy.

Local Development Companies (LDC): Organisations with a role to support economic and social development in their catchment area. LDCs are usually contracted to deliver programmes such as the Rural Development Programme (LEADER), Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and Tús.

Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for a range of changes to the organisation and work of Local Authorities. Among other things, it provides for the merger of a number of Local Authorities; the abolition of town councils; the abolition of city and county development boards; the establishment of Local Community Development Committees and it provides for a range of changes to the functions carried out by Local Authorities. Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 came into effect on 1 June 2014, and provided the legislative basis for the Public Participation Networks (PPNs).

MOU means Memorandum of Understanding (agreement between LA and PPN) in respect of the funding, recruitment, workplan requirements and so on.

Municipal District (MD): A subdivision of a Local Authority area. Councillors meet at Municipal District level as well as in full Council. MDs were established following the passing of the Local Government Reform Act in 2014.

NAG means the PPN National Advisory Group.

Not for profit organisations are organisations that work for the good of society, communities and/or specific interest. They do not make a profit and any income they do make that is above what they need to keep the organisation running is invested back into the organisation to improve it or to keep it going. No payments are made to any shareholders. There are many types of not for profit organisations, from very small groups to very large charities.

Pillars means, in this Handbook, the Community and Voluntary Pillar; Social Inclusion Pillar; and Environmental Pillar, being the recognised channels for dialogue with Government on areas of concern to its membership.

Plenary: All the Member Groups in a PPN. The Plenary is the ultimate decision-making body of the PPN on operational and local policy issues. The Plenary delegates the administrative and day-to-day functions of the PPN to the PPN Secretariat.

Participative Democracy see definition of Deliberative Democracy.

PPN Budget means the annual amount a PPN has available to it, provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Local Authority and other sources.

Salesforce is a data and information management system that is used by all PPNs. The system allows PPNs to record and manage information about Member Groups; store details of organisations and community and network groups; manage funding, campaigns and mass emails; and generate customised reports.

Secretariat means the administrative body of the PPN whose role is to put into practice the decisions of the Plenary; ensure that the PPN runs smoothly in between Plenaries; coordinate the activities of the PPN; communicate regularly with all PPN Member Groups and spread information about all PPN activities as widely as possible; and facilitate and enable the PPN Workers in their day to day activities to deliver PPN objectives (see Circular CVSP2 2014). More information on the role and duties of the Secretariat is contained in Sections 2 (Who are the PPN?) and 6 (The Secretariat).

SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) is designed to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality. Each SICAP provider works with both individuals and community groups in a city/county or subdivision thereof, with a focus on people experiencing disadvantage and areas which are designated disadvantaged.

SLA means Service Level Agreement (between the PPN and a service provider or the Local Authority and a service provider) in respect of the operational activities of the PPN.

Social Inclusion: Activity centred on working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are on the margins in society, living in poverty and/or in unemployment. Social Inclusion organisations or groups use a community development model to build sustainable communities, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

SPC (Strategic Policy Committee): Local Authority committees in City and County Councils whose membership includes Elected Councillors, representatives of business, farming interests, environmental/conservation groups, trade unions and community and voluntary members. It is the task of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), as committees of the Council, to advise and assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy. They have no role in routine operational matters about the delivery of services. The SPC system is intended to give Councillors and the SPC Representatives an opportunity for full involvement in the policy-making process from the early stages.

Stakeholders means all people, groups, State bodies and local and national Government Departments impacted by or with an interest in the operation and function of the PPN. More detail on Stakeholders is set out in Section 2.

Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Thematic Group: A group of PPN groups working on a cross-cutting policy theme, e.g. disability, social inclusion, sustainability.

Tús: A community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people.

Vision for Community Well-being in the context of the PPN and its Member Groups, describes a community whose basic needs are met, where people have a sense of purpose and feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives they value and have reason to value. A process for the development of a Vision for Community Wellbeing is available to all PPNs to help them to consult with their Member Groups on what this Vision should contain. More detail on the Vision for Community Wellbeing is set out in Section 11.

Volunteer-led organisations are groups whose leadership is made up of volunteers acting as a committee, board or other structure. Some volunteer-led organisations may also have paid staff who carry out the day to day tasks on behalf of the leadership.

Working Group on Citizen Engagement was set up in September 2013. Its role was to make recommendations on more extensive and diverse inputs by citizens into the decision-making processes at Local Government level. The Report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement was published on 28 February 2014 and its recommendations led to the establishment of the PPNs.

Worker means Resource Worker, Support Worker or other worker engaged by the PPN to carry out its duties.



Who are the PPN? – The Stakeholders

Simply put, the Stakeholders of any organisation are any and all people, groups, organisations, Departments and so on, that might impact, or be impacted by, the work of that organisation. The PPNs are set up to give a voice to groups involved in their local communities into decision-making on policies that affect them. Getting the work of the PPN done means that everyone involved must work together, that means all of the Stakeholders. What follows is a brief introduction to the Stakeholders of the PPNs.

The Plenary (the Membership and the Member Groups)

The Member Groups must be involved in all operational and local policy decisions of the PPN. The interests of the Member Groups are the main interests of the PPN, which means they set the agenda and influence the work programme of the PPN.



The Plenary (all the member organisations together) is the key decision maker of the PPN on operational issues and local policy focus for the PPN, meeting at least twice a year. Their role is to direct the operation of the PPN, setting overall PPN policy and processes, for example agreeing the annual Workplan, the Budget and so on.

Decisions made between Plenary meetings must be presented for ratification (that is, approval) to the following meeting. Each independent full Member Group has one vote in the Plenary. Plenary meetings are an ideal forum for Member Groups to meet and network and to hear about matters of interest to them. It is also a really important meeting for the PPN as a whole as it sets the direction for the PPN.



The Secretariat

The Secretariat is the administrative body of the PPN. It carries out the decisions of the Plenary and makes sure the day-to-day work of the PPN gets done. The membership of the Secretariat should be as broad as possible to reflect the range of Member Groups that make up the PPN.



- How the Secretariat is made up should reflect the PPN as a whole. To comply with the Department's circular (CVSP 1/2014), the PPN Secretariat must contain at a minimum:
- one representative from each of the Municipal Districts in a county (or set geographical areas within the cities), and
- equal numbers (but at least two people) from each of the three electoral colleges (Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary).

Where vacancies occur, they should be filled as soon as possible.

People elected to the Secretariat must be nominated by a Member Group from within their own area (that is, geographical area) or College (that is, Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion or Environmental).

Some PPNs may also wish to appoint Secretariat members on the basis of Linkage / Thematic groups, provided always that the composition of the Secretariat is consistent with the above Departmental Circular. The important thing is that the Secretariat acts on behalf of all of the PPN in conducting its business.

Election of the Secretariat Members should follow a democratic process which matches the ethos of democracy in the PPNs. In some PPNs, only Member Groups connected from the same area or College are allowed to vote for each nominee. For example, if a candidate is nominated by a group in the Social Inclusion College in a particular municipal district, only Member Groups who are part of the Social Inclusion College in that area may vote for them. In others, election of all PPN representatives are by the full Plenary.

The College system ensures that all three separate voices (Environment, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary) within the PPN can be equally represented and clearly communicated. The Secretariat is an administrative body only, and its role is to

- Help put operational decisions of the Plenary in place.
- Make sure that the PPN is working properly in between Plenaries on behalf of the Member Groups.
- Organise or help to organise the PPN activities on behalf of the Member Groups.
- Communicate regularly with all PPN Members and share information about all PPN activities as widely as possible.
- Keep correct, up to date, records of PPN business, including minutes of meetings and making sure agendas are circulated in good time.
- Be a point of contact for the PPN for the Local Authority, Department of Rural and Community Development, other PPNs, the National Advisory Group and other stakeholders of the PPN.
- Deal with all correspondence on behalf of PPN, by sending out copies and writing responses.
- Facilitate and enable the PPN Workers in their day to day activities to deliver PPN objectives.



In order to really provide participation, the PPN must make sure that Representative roles, such as the Secretariat, are refreshed regularly.

Secretariats must be refreshed at least every 3-5 years to ensure balance between the need to have some members in place with the knowledge and understanding of the work that the PPN is doing, and the need to make sure that the membership is represented.

When the Secretariat is being refreshed, the longest-serving members must step down first to allow new voices to join. In addition, no Secretariat member should serve more than two consecutive terms.

The PPNs must separate the election cycle for the Secretariat from the local election cycle for Councillors, to ensure that an experienced Secretariat is in place when there is a need to elect new representatives to Local Authority Boards and Committees. Where this is not the case, PPNs must put a plan in place to do this as soon as possible.



Secretariat Network

A national Secretariat Network was established in 2019 to provide an opportunity for Secretariat members to network, share ideas and best practice and support each other generally. Each PPN is represented by one member of the Secretariat who may alternate. This network meets a minimum of 4 times per year.

Secretariats are also encouraged to engage and collaborate at regional level to informal structures

Workers

Resource Worker

The role of the Resource Worker is to work on behalf of the Plenary to support the development of plans and actions on behalf of the PPN and to put them in place. The Resource Workers organise meetings and events for Members, Secretariats and other stakeholders, promote the PPN and encourage membership, organise community consultations and identify and organise training to meet the needs of the PPN Member Groups to build their capacity to engage fully in participation. In addition, they do other work that may reasonably be needed on behalf of the PPN.

Resource Workers can be employed under a variety of arrangements including from within the Local Authority, hosted in an external organisation or employed directly by a PPN Support Company (see Department Circular CVSP1/2015).

The day to day activities of the Resource Worker in delivering the PPN objectives are facilitated and enabled by the Secretariat on behalf of the Plenary within the structures set out in this Handbook, in respect of their work on behalf of the PPN. They work independently of the Local Authority and are answerable only to the PPN Secretariat in carrying out their PPN work. Where the Resource Worker is employed by the Local Authority / Host Organisation / Support Organisation, HR and administration of payroll will be a matter for the Local Authority / Host Organisation / Support Organisation and this should be clearly set out in the assignment arrangements.

Support Worker

The Support Worker supports the Resource Worker and the Secretariat in their work. They support the organisation of meetings and events for Members, Secretariats and other stakeholders, promote the PPN and encourage membership, organise community consultations and support the Resource Worker to identify and organise training to

meet the needs of the PPN Member Groups to build their capacity to engage fully in participation. In addition, they undertake any other role that may reasonably be required on behalf of the PPN.

Support Workers can be employed under a variety of arrangements including by the Local Authority, hosted in an external organisation or employed directly by a PPN Support Company.

The Support Worker is managed by, and reports to, the Resource Worker, who is their direct line manager. They work independently of the Local Authority and are answerable to the PPN Secretariat/Resource Worker in carrying out their work. Where the Support Worker is employed by the Local Authority / Host Organisation / Support Organisation, HR and administration of payroll will be a matter for the Local Authority / Host Organisation / Support Organisation and this should be clearly set out in the assignment arrangements.

Others

PPNs may also recruit other workers / Tús scheme participants at their discretion and within their own budget, subject to local arrangements.

Resource Workers Network

A national Resource Workers Network was established in 2016 to provide an opportunity for Resource Workers to network, share ideas and best practice and support each other generally. This network meets a minimum of 4 times per year and is directly supported and facilitated by the Department (with the exception of attendees' travel expenses which are covered by individual PPNs).

PPN Representatives

PPN Representatives perform an important function on behalf of the PPNs. They are elected by Member Groups in their College / area to represent the PPN on Local Authority Boards or Committees on behalf of the PPN. In doing this, they represent the PPN Plenary, their own Municipal District / area, and their College. This is a critical role for the PPNs as Representatives provide the "PPN voice at the table".



PPN Representatives must provide feedback to the PPN and relevant structures (Linkage Groups / Colleges), within the limits of confidentiality, about what was discussed at their relevant committees and the outcomes of these discussions. It is the responsibility of the PPN Representatives to provide this feedback and to do that as soon as possible after the meeting. Each PPN must have a process for PPN Representatives to report.

More detail on the role, rights and responsibilities of Representatives is contained in Section 5 of this Handbook.

Linkage Groups and Thematic Groups

Linkage Groups are the way that PPN Member Groups can have a real input into policy in their area of operation. When a Local Authority Board or Committee requests Representation from the PPN, the PPN calls for a Linkage Group to be established. Linkage Groups bring together organisations who want to input into the working of the Board or Committee to discuss their views and interests and provide a mandate for the PPN Representative.

These groups nominate, and in some cases elect, PPN Representatives to Boards or Committees, receive feedback from those Representatives, and give views and information that feeds into the Representatives' mandate. The Linkage Groups may also set policy priorities for the Representatives to advance, and input into consultations on behalf of PPN.

Being part of a Linkage Group helps the Member Groups to get a deeper understanding of how decisions are made at local government level. It is also the key way to have their voice heard. It is important to note that the role of a Linkage Group is to give space for Member Groups to voice a wide range of views and inputs that may be relevant to the Board or Committee that they are linked to. Most Committees, particularly the Strategic Policy Committees, have a very wide brief and so it is important that as many diverse voices are part of the Linkage Group as possible.

PPNs may also (either as an alternative to Linkage Groups or in addition to them) have Thematic Groups which form around areas of interest (not necessarily specific policy areas or Committees). Depending on the PPN, these groups can nominate, and in some cases elect, PPN Representatives and set agendas for Boards and Committees in much the same way as the Linkage Groups were intended to.

Where a PPN has both Linkage and Thematic Groups, they must decide how best to use them to progress the work of the PPN as required by the Plenary.

Local Authorities

There are 31 Local Authorities in Ireland, delivering a broad range of services in relation to roads; traffic; planning; housing; economic and community development; environment, recreation and amenity services; fire services and maintaining the register of electors.



In order to progress the work of the PPN, the Local Authorities and PPNs must work together meaningfully to their mutual benefit. The PPN is the primary route by which Local Authorities get inputs for consultations with their communities, and community representatives on their Boards and Committees. As such, PPNs play a key role in supporting the development of each Local Authority area. Local Authorities, in turn, provide crucial supports to many PPNs in addition to funding. While always maintaining the independence of both the PPN and the Local Authority, it is important that there is a good working relationship between the two.

PPNs can also support the work of the Local Authority by organising and supporting consultations with their Member Groups and encouraging support for relevant Local Authority programmes where these are of benefit to their Member Groups.

Each Local Authority also provides funding towards the operational cost of the PPN.

Department of Rural and Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development (the Department) is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy to Support the Community & Voluntary Sector in Ireland, which sets out a long-term vision for our communities in Ireland and has the development of the PPNs as one of its key objectives. They have responsibility at Government level for the PPNs. They are the main funder of the PPNs and provide strategic support and direction to the network. A representative of the Department chairs the PPN National Advisory Group.

Host Organisations

A host organisation is a community organisation that allows the PPN to use its resources – for example office space, equipment, administrative staff and so on – usually for a fee. They may also, in some instances, be the employer of the PPN Workers.

Host Organisations and PPNs (and where relevant Local Authorities) must have an agreement or memorandum of understanding in place to ensure that all parties are aware of their roles, responsibilities and boundaries.



PPN Support Companies Limited by Guarantee

Some PPNs are supported and hosted by special-purpose companies limited by guarantee. These companies were incorporated to provide supports to the PPN and provide the services of a Host Organisation.

PPN National Advisory Group

The PPN National Advisory Group includes one representative each from the Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion sectors, three PPN Volunteers – one each representing the three different Colleges, three PPN Resource Workers and two Local Authority staff (one at Director of Service level and one directly supporting a PPN). The Group is chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development who also provide the secretariat services for the Group.

Along with its monitoring role, the National Advisory Group is also charged with advising and supporting the Department of Rural and Community Development to develop the PPNs.

The Colleges

On becoming a member of a PPN, each organisation is asked to select its College which represents their main interest.

Community and Voluntary

The Community and Voluntary College is for Member Groups whose main focus is on community responses to local issues and who have activities that promote the overall wellbeing in their community. Examples of Member Groups in this College include Residents' Associations, Community Councils, Active Retirement Groups, Arts Groups, Youth Groups and so on.

Social Inclusion

The Social Inclusion College consists of Member Groups involved in working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society; those living in poverty; or those in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities. Examples of organisations in this College include Traveller groups, groups supporting new communities, people with disabilities, mental health and suicide awareness groups, Women's groups and so on.

Environmental

The Environmental College consists of Member Groups whose main aims and activities are Environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and / or environmental sustainability. Such activities include permanent protection of wildlife, species specific care, organic horticulture or education, environmental education or protection, environmental sustainability, resource efficiency and recycling, invasive alien species prevention/removal.



As a requirement of the Environmental Pillar, in order to be part of the Environmental College, groups must meet certain specific criteria, provided by the Environmental Pillar.



2

Structure of the PPN



A Flat Structure

The PPNs are established on the basis of a Flat Structure. There is no exact definition of what a Flat Structure is, but basically it means that no single individual, group or sector controls the PPN.

Day to day management of the PPN is de-centralised and all Member Groups have a chance to be represented on the Secretariat and / or a Local Authority Board or Committee. As an example, a Flat Structure in so far as the Secretariat is concerned, means that every member of the Secretariat will be given the opportunity to adapt to different roles from time to time as these roles rotate through the membership.

There is no defined hierarchy, and moving away from a hierarchical structure means that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and participate fully. This also means that there is collective responsibility for the work carried out by the PPN and for achieving the aims of the Workplan.

By having a Flat Structure in place, it not only means that everyone has the chance to input into the decision-making process, but it also allows for members to understand all aspects of the process. It's a key part of the capacity building process of the PPN.

Having a Flat Structure does not mean being without leadership or management, but that the leadership encourages and supports members to participate and takes responsibility for overseeing commitments. An example of this is the role of Rotating Facilitator of the Secretariat. The Rotating Facilitator should have a defined term (suggested 6 months) rather than having a Chair in place for an extended period of time. This provides enough accountability to the PPN by having a key contact to ensure the Workplan is delivered, while also ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to have their turn to facilitate Secretariat meetings.



How to Maintain a Flat Structure

1. Spread the love (and the workload)!

It is key to a Flat Structure that PPNs avoid involving a small number of people in a large number of pieces of work / decision-making. The aim should instead be to spread the work and decision-making across the membership (see below). Making sure that Member Groups have clear information, in a format that is accessible to their needs, is really important to their active participation in this role.



2. Promote your Principles!

It is important that the principles of a Flat Structure are promoted in all communications to Member Groups and that the language used in all communications is inclusive and encourages wide and open participation. Meetings of the Plenary, Secretariats, Linkage Groups, Municipal Districts and so on should all be organised in such a way that they are as inclusive as possible and aims for equal participation. Examples of where this has worked effectively within PPNs include:

- Having a rotating Facilitator with a limited term (suggest 6 months. This role is currently called the Rotating Chair / Rotating Facilitator).
- Holding meetings at different times and in rotating or central locations so that as many people as possible can attend. Weekends, lunchtimes (for short meetings) and evenings tend to suit volunteers. Daytime meetings often exclude working people. Checking in with your Member Groups to see what suits, and being mindful to check with new Member Groups as they sign up, will help.
- Making sure to circulate information and documents in good time before the meeting so that people have a chance to read through them and prepare any questions or points they might have. This can be particularly important where someone might need to check in with others in their organisation or group before the meeting.
- Ensuring the layout of the room allows for networking, discussion and engagement and that there is enough time on agendas for issues to be raised and discussed properly. If in doubt, call for agenda items before the meeting and start with a small agenda so that there's enough discussion time.
- Having opportunities for small group discussions, or break-out with smaller groups to discuss key topics.
- Making a note of all points made during a meeting and including these in the written note of the meeting afterwards. This note should be circulated to everyone who attended the meeting for their approval before being sent to the wider group. This shows people that their points have been listened to and taken on board.
- Being open to new or innovative technologies (and we've all had a crash course in this recently!) can enable people who are not physically able to be at the meeting to still participate in it.
- Allowing time for networking before, during or after meetings, and making a point of chatting to newcomers or those who may know few others at the meeting.
- Evaluating meetings afterwards, including all participants and asking for (and accepting) honest feedback.

PPN Companies

Some PPNs have chosen to set up support companies or co-operatives. Where this is the case, these companies or co-operatives should act as supports only, in much the same way as a Host Organisation. It should not impose a hierarchical structure or take away from the Flat Structure of the PPN.

Where a company has been established, it is the responsibility of each of the officers of the company (Director, Company Secretary, Treasurer and so on) to be fully aware of their role and responsibility and for the company, as a separate legal entity, to comply with the Companies Act 2014 and all associated legislation and regulations. For more information on these roles, relevant PPNs and their officers should refer to the guidance on the website of the Companies Registration Office, www.cro.ie.

It is intended by the Department to undertake a structural review of PPNs. All stakeholders will be consulted as part of this review.

Pending the structural review, any PPNs wishing to establish a company structure must firstly submit for the Department's approval, a detailed case outlining their rationale for their proposal.



Municipal Districts

Each county is now organised into Municipal Districts, where the councillors and Local Authority staff have certain powers relating to operations and maintenance works within the district. Each Municipal District should also have a Municipal District PPN to deal with local-level items of interest to its Member Groups.

A Municipal District PPN is a meeting of all the Member Groups with a postal address in that Municipal District. Each Municipal District PPN should develop a Vision for Community Wellbeing for their area as well as addressing locally based policy issues and engaging with Local Authority staff and elected members. Far from creating additional work for Member Groups, for many this local level of participation might be more relevant to their needs rather than the larger Local Authority area or County PPN. In cities where there is no Municipal District structure, they may wish to establish sub PPNs in set geographical areas, perhaps based on electoral areas.

PPN Funding

Funding for the PPNs is provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development (majority funder) and each Local Authority (co-funder). PPNs may apply for funding from other sources for specific projects, subject to these projects being in line with the core work of the PPN as set out by the Plenary. They must also be consistent with the role and objectives of the PPN.



This funding provided by the Department and the Local Authorities is ring-fenced and can only be used for the purposes of developing and maintaining the PPN. The most common usage which the Department envisages for the funding would be:

- Cost of employment of a Resource Worker and Support Worker (full time equivalent)
- Office space, infrastructure and materials for the Resource Worker and Support Worker
- Expenses incurred by the PPN in carrying out its activities i.e. holding meetings, training, elections, publicity materials, insurance etc.
- Expenses of Secretariat and PPN representatives on Local Authority committees (where these cannot be recouped elsewhere).

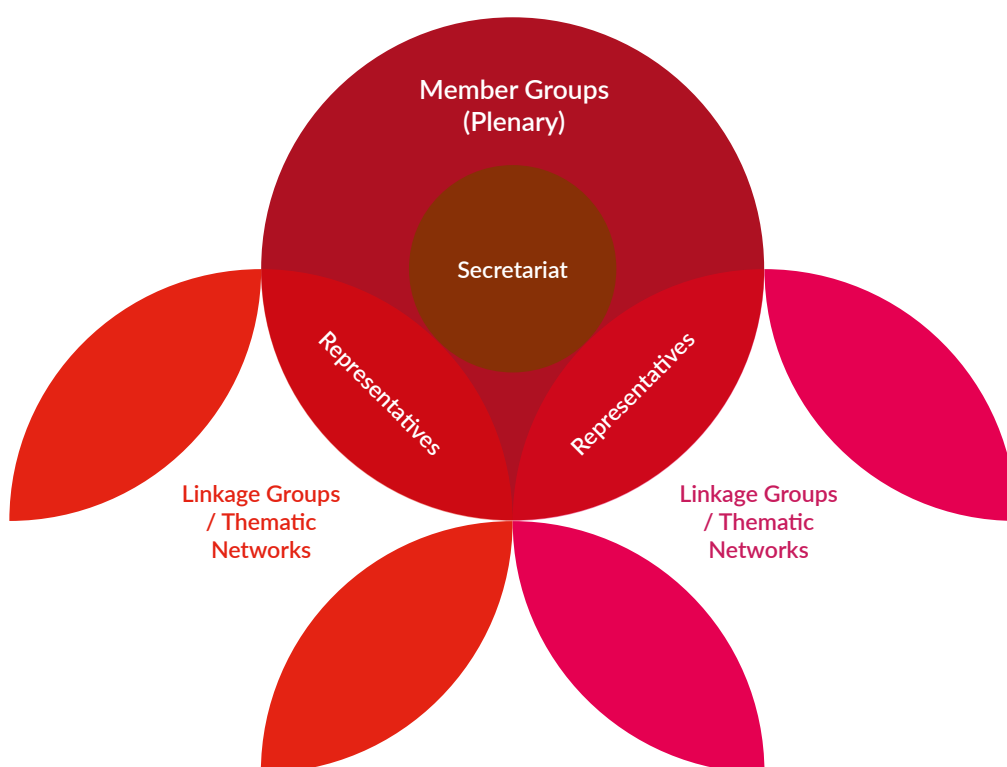


3

Membership of the PPN



The Plenary, i.e. all the Member Groups together, elect the Secretariat. The Linkage Groups / Thematic Groups are also made up of Member Groups who have come together around a particular set of issues or Board or Committee. These Linkage Groups, and in some cases Thematic Networks (depending on how the PPN operates these groups) elect Representatives to sit on Boards and Committees.



PPNs are meant to be inclusive of the full and diverse range of volunteer-led organisations in their Local Authority area. Membership is open to groups which

- Are active and with a postal address in the Local Authority area. It is the PPNs' responsibility to validate the identity of its Member Groups.
- Operate on a not-for profit basis.
- Are volunteer-led (organisations may have paid staff, but must be under voluntary control).
- Are independent, and this can include local and regional branches of national organisations.

- Have at least 3 members and are open to new members.
- Have an appropriate governance structure e.g. set of rules / constitution / financial procedures.
- Meet regularly.
- Are in existence for at least six months.
- Are non-party political.

Each member organisation must then choose to be part of one of the three electoral Colleges – Community and Voluntary; Social Inclusion; or Environmental.

The Benefits of PPN Membership

Having a say in the policies that affect the community. The main benefit of joining a PPN is the opportunity to take part in deliberative democracy, where deliberation (participation and discussion) is central to the decision-making processes. This allows Member Groups to have a real say in how communities are shaped and helps to make sure that community voices inform Local Government policy-making.

Every Member Group should be involved in:

- **Developing the PPN Strategic Plan**

Every PPN should have a Strategic Plan that covers, subject to funding, three to five years. This Strategic Plan should be developed by the Member Groups of the PPN; written up by the Secretariat and Workers; and put to the next Plenary meeting for approval.

- **Communications**

The Secretariat and PPN Workers in each PPN will make sure that Member Groups are kept up to date on activities and consultations that may be relevant to them. PPN websites and social media are updated regularly and most PPNs also provide a regular newsletter and / or e-bulletin with information and updates on a wide range of community-related topics and issues.

- **Supports**

On joining the PPN, Member Groups will be given an induction pack welcoming them to the PPN and setting out the benefits and expectations of PPN membership. In some areas, new members are invited to a PPN Information Session and are given a Members' Handbook.

The Secretariat of each PPN makes sure that the proper policies and procedures are in place so that the PPN functions in an open, transparent and accountable way. Some

examples of these policies and procedures are contained in the Appendices to this Handbook, others may be available from the PPN directly.

- Training and Networking

An important function of the PPN is to build capacity among its Member Groups to participate fully in deliberative democracy at local, regional and, in some cases, national levels.

All PPNs provide training for Member Groups on topics that support this participation as appropriate to its membership. This training is free or very low cost and representatives of Member Groups are encouraged to attend where it meets their needs.

In addition to training, many PPNs also provide networking events for Member Groups to share their experiences and to support each other with best practices.

Training and networking events are advertised on the PPN websites, social media channels, e-letters and other communications channels available to the PPNs.

Registering as a Member

To register a group for membership of the PPN, groups will need to contact the PPN directly and complete a registration form (this may be paper or online, depending on the PPN concerned).

Finding a PPN is easy – every PPN has a website, many have social media e.g. Facebook page and / or Twitter account. A full list of contact details for each PPN is available on the PPN Section of the Department's website.

Supporting the Member Groups

The Member Groups should feel supported and empowered by their participation in the PPN. If a Member Group has any complaint about the operations or activities of the PPN, they should try to deal directly with the PPN, following the PPN Complaints Procedure. Complaints about a PPN will not be dealt with by the Local Authority.



All PPNs must have a Complaints Procedure in place. A sample Complaints Procedure is set out in Appendix 2.

To keep Member Groups up to date, the PPN Workers will develop a report for the Plenary on the work of the PPN since the date of the last Plenary meeting.

The Requirements of PPN Membership

Members of the PPN play an important part in shaping policies that affect their community. PPN Representatives sit on Local Authority Boards and Committees to represent the views of their Linkage Groups, their College and the Plenary (i.e. all Member Groups of the PPN). Member Groups are encouraged to stay in touch with their PPN to make sure that their views are heard and that they have a say in shaping the actions and priorities of the PPN. Members can do this by:

- Attending the Plenary Meetings
- Joining a PPN Linkage Group / Thematic Group and actively participating in its meetings (see Section 4)
- Engaging with the PPN in a way consistent with the Constitution of that PPN
- Supporting the development of a Vision for Community Wellbeing
- Staying up to date with PPN news
- Participating in training and networking events

Attending the Plenary Meetings

The main decision making body of the PPN is the Plenary (i.e. all the independent Member Groups of the PPN) which should, unless in exceptional circumstances, meet at least twice a year to review how the PPN is working and to set the work agenda for the coming period.

The main role of the Plenary is to direct the operations of the PPN, to set overall PPN policy and procedures and to agree the annual Workplan and budget. The elected Secretariat is responsible for the administration of the PPN between Plenary meetings. Subsets of the PPN such as Municipal District PPNs and Linkage / Thematic Groups also inform the process.

A Plenary Meeting shall be deemed a valid meeting if at least 15 per cent of the Member Organisations are represented and also only if at least four of those present are members of the Secretariat. There must also be an automatic and guaranteed 21 days' notice of the meeting.

Decisions made between Plenary meetings must be presented for ratification to the following meeting of the Plenary. Each full independent Member Group has one vote in the Plenary. Plenary meetings are an ideal place for Member Groups to meet and network and to hear about matters of interest to them.



Engaging with the PPN in a way consistent with the Constitution of the PPN



Each PPN must have a Constitution in place to govern its activities. This Constitution has been developed by the PPN in consultation with its Member Groups and approved by the Plenary. The Constitution should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is consistent with this Handbook and all Departmental Circulars.

The Constitution is the main governance document for the PPN and lays out a set of rules by which every stakeholder involved must abide. Member Groups should familiarise themselves with the Constitution of their PPN as soon as possible.

A number of sample Constitutions are set out in Appendix 1.

Supporting the Development of a Vision for Community Wellbeing

Member Groups are also asked to provide their views, experience and expertise to develop a Vision for Community Wellbeing, which identifies the key issues that Member Groups in a PPN area consider are important for their community to be the best for this and future generations (the Vision).

The process for developing this Vision involves a series of consultation meetings in each Municipal District. These consultations are intensive and engaging and directly inform the final Vision document, which is presented to the Plenary for approval.

The Vision document is then used to inform Representatives on Boards and Committees, local and national submissions on a wide range of issues and form part of all induction training. Members are strongly encouraged to participate in these consultations to shape the future of their communities.

More detail on the process for the development of this Vision is set out in Section 11.

4

Linkage and Thematic Groups



Linkage Groups are the way that PPN Member Groups can have a real input into policy in their area of operation. Linkage Groups bring together organisations with a common interest to discuss their views and interests in a specific policy area linked to Committee or Board with PPN Representation.

Joining a PPN Linkage Group

Each Member Group is encouraged to join one or more of the PPN's Linkage Groups. These are specific-purpose sub-groups of the PPN matched to Local Authority Committees or Boards and other agencies in the Local Authority area. Linkage Groups bring together Member Groups that have a common interest in the agenda of these Committees or Boards. This agenda can be very broad and take in interests of Member Groups from all three Colleges and a wide range of areas.

Where a PPN has both Linkage and Thematic Groups, they must decide how best to use them to progress the work of the PPN as required by the Plenary.

Linkage Groups

Linkage Groups are linked to Local Authority Boards or Committees. When a Local Authority asks the PPN for representation, the PPN should call a Linkage Group together. These groups nominate, and in some cases elect PPN Representatives to Boards or Committees, receive feedback from those Representatives, and direct their activity by holding meetings to discuss the issues that may come up and feeding into the Representatives mandate for the Board or Committee meeting. They may also input into consultations on behalf of PPN. This also helps the Member Groups to gain a deeper understanding of the local policy process as they get to discuss the work of these Boards or Committees with the Representative, provide inputs for the Representative to carry forward at their meetings and get feedback from the Representative.

Examples of linkage groups may include (depending on the PPN) Community Safety and Joint Policing, which links in to the Joint Policing Committee of the Local Authority; Housing, Planning and Transport, which links in to the Housing, Planning and Transport Strategic Policy Committees of the Local Authority in addition to national agencies such as Irish Rail, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and so on.

It is important to note that the role of a Linkage Group is to facilitate and enable organisations to voice a wide range of views and interests within the local government system. It is intended to add to the participation of Member Groups, not replace or reduce it in any way.

By joining a Linkage Group, a Member Group can directly influence policy and decision-making in its area by nominating Representatives for election, and in some cases electing Representatives to sit on Boards and Committees established by the Local Authority and other stakeholders within the community. These Representatives take direction from their Linkage Groups, input what has been agreed by the

Group and provide feedback to the Linkage Group that ensures transparency and accountability.

More details on the Role of Representatives is set out in Section 5.

Thematic Groups

PPNs may also (either as an alternative to Linkage Groups or in addition to them) have Thematic Groups which form around areas of interest (not necessarily specific policy areas, Boards or Committees). In some PPNs these groups can nominate, and in some cases elect, PPN Representatives and set agendas for Boards and Committees in much the same way as the Linkage Groups.

Examples of thematic groups may include groups with a particular interest in disability issues, environmental issues, childcare and so on. These thematic groups may come together to develop strategies for the PPN on areas of interest and feed in to relevant local and national policies.

Membership and the Linkage / Thematic Groups (where nominations and elections are allowed through Thematic Groups)

The PPN will invite all Member Groups to join a Linkage / Thematic Group. Member Groups who want to join will nominate an individual to attend meetings on its behalf.

Role of the Linkage / Thematic Group is to

- Nominate, and in some cases elect, Representative(s) to the relevant statutory / Local Authority Board or Committee, with the exception of the LCDC whose Representatives are elected by the members of the relevant College.
- Discuss and debate the matters being discussed by the relevant statutory / Local Authority Board or Committee, to inform the Representative(s), and where relevant to prioritise and develop policy positions.
- Support the Representatives to fulfil their role by advancing the diversity of views within the Linkage / Thematic Group to the relevant statutory / Local Authority Board or Committee.
- Agree and implement a way of communicating with the Representative(s) and with each other, which is effective and realistic (e.g. messaging groups, emails, web calls, face to face etc.).
- Work with the Secretariat to censure or remove the Representative(s) if they are not fulfilling the terms of their appointment.
- Work with the PPN Secretariat and report to the Plenary as required.
- Work collaboratively with other Linkage / Thematic Groups and Representatives to advance the aims of the PPN.

Rights of the Linkage / Thematic Group members are to

- Receive relevant information about the work of the relevant statutory / Local Authority Board or Committee to help them to participate fully.
- Receive regular communications (at least as frequently as the relevant statutory / Local Authority Board or Committee meetings are held) from the Representative on matters such as
 - o Dates of Board or Committee meetings
 - o Agendas for Board or Committee meetings
 - o Reports from Board or Committee meetings
 - o Items which require their input
- Have regular discussions in an agreed format (face to face / conference calls / email / social media groups etc.).
- Have their issues brought forward by the Representative.
- Have Linkage / Thematic Group discussions facilitated in an open inclusive way, accommodating the views of all members.

Responsibilities of Linkage / Thematic Group members are to

- Operate in accordance with the principles and values of the PPN.
- Have realistic expectations of what a Representative can achieve, and understand the confidentiality restrictions that they may be under.
- Be open to new organisations joining the Linkage / Thematic Group, and to actively look for the input of all groups who have an interest in the area, particularly those who are traditionally excluded.
- Communicate clearly and openly with the Representative and other Linkage / Thematic Group members, recognising that there may be differing views expressed on issues, and that the Representative must bring the diversity of views to the Board or Committee.
- Take the time to read and understand communications that are received and, where something is unclear, to speak to the relevant Representative / Secretariat Member / PPN Worker to clarify.
- Develop realistic policy proposals to address issues raised and support the Representative to bring views forward, by providing relevant facts and research where possible.
- Feed back to their own Member Groups on the work of the Linkage / Thematic Group and Board or Committee.
- Inform the wider PPN of key issues and policy positions.
- Keep records of dates, attendance, outputs etc. of meetings (virtual or face to face).

5 The Representatives



Local Authorities and other local bodies have a range of Committees and Boards to support them to develop policy by involving external expertise. This expertise can be drawn from sectoral interests such as employers, farmers, trades unions and the community. **Community representation – that of the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors - is a core function of the PPN. Other groups** who have representation through other pillars of social partnership e.g. trade unions, farming and business organisations, cannot seek representation through the PPN. The Local Authority must use the PPN to appoint Community Representatives to these Boards and Committees and to ensure that they are listened to.

PPN Representatives must then provide feedback to the PPN and their Linkage Group, within the limits of confidentiality, about what was discussed at their meetings and the outcomes of these discussions. **It is the responsibility of the PPN Representatives to provide this feedback.**

Who can be a Representative

PPN Representatives perform an important function on behalf of PPNs. They are elected by Member Groups in their College / area to get involved in, and contribute to, Local Authority Boards or Committees on behalf of the PPN. In doing this, they represent the PPN as a whole, their own Municipal District / area, their College and their group.

The regulations concerning Local Authority staff serving as elected representatives in local, national and European government will also apply to PPN representation. Local Authority staff above the prescribed grade are not eligible to represent the PPN on Local Authority Boards and Committees even where they are involved with a Member Group. Following the guidance provided in Departmental Circular CVSP 01/2014, the following criteria will apply in making a decision on who to nominate:

- The track record of the nominee in working on the issue that is the focus for the representative forum.
- The ability of the nominee to make an effective contribution.
- The participation of people experiencing the problem/issue to be addressed at the representative forum.
- Whether the problem/issue to be addressed at the forum is a 'core issue' for the PPN member.
- As far as possible ensuring fair distribution of positions across geographical areas.
- As far as possible ensuring gender balance.
- A commitment from the person(s) to participate fully with the Linkage Group, including reporting back.

Role, Rights and Responsibilities of the Representative

A Representative is elected for a fixed term to represent the issues of Member Groups on a particular Board or Committee. Details of the exact term of office should be provided with the information requesting nominations for the role. Some of these Boards or Committees are policy-driven, rather than operational bodies, while others are operational only. Elections to these Boards and Committees take place according to procedures developed by the Secretariat and approved by the Plenary. An example of this process is set out later in this Section.

The role of PPN Representative is an active and participative one which requires commitment and time. Representatives are required to represent the views of their Linkage / Thematic Group (where Thematic Groups are used to nominate and elect Representatives) as a whole, and not their own personal views, nor those of their Municipal District, Sector or Nominating Body. Before a potential Representative decides that they want to be nominated, they should read their PPN's Representative Charter in full and ask their PPN Resource Worker if they have any questions or need anything clarified. A sample Representatives Charter is set out in Appendix 3 of this Handbook.

Representatives are required to communicate regularly with their Linkage / Thematic Groups to make sure that they are bringing agreed and relevant issues to the Boards and Committees on which they sit. They are also required to report back regularly to Linkage / Thematic Groups using the standard PPN reporting template. A sample Reporting Template is set out in Appendix 4.

Role of the Representative

The role of the Representative is a rewarding one. It is also a commitment of time and energy to make sure that it is carried out fully. To do this, the Representative must:

- Attend and participate fully in meetings of the Linkage / Thematic Group and Board or Committee, including any subgroups to which they may be appointed.
- Bring forward the issues of the Linkage Group to the Board or Committee for their consideration, including putting items on the agenda. They are not there just to represent their own group or opinion.
- Work collaboratively with the Linkage / Thematic Group to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc. of interest or concern to the Group.
- Communicate regularly (at least as often as meetings are held) with the Linkage / Thematic Group about
 - Dates of Board or Committee meetings
 - Agendas for Board or Committee meetings
 - Reports from Board or Committee meetings
 - Items which require their input and / or are of interest to the Linkage / Thematic Group

- Network and work strategically with other Board or Committee members for the benefit of the Linkage / Thematic Group and of the PPN, including being able to compromise while maintaining the core agreed objective of the Linkage / Thematic Group.

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.

Responsibilities of the Representative

The Representative also has responsibilities to the PPN and the Linkage / Thematic Group. These include to:

- Organise Linkage / Thematic Group meetings and effective communications with Linkage Group members.
- Be able to use basic electronic communications effectively (i.e. email and internet browsing) or other suitable alternative.
- Prepare thoroughly for, attend and participate actively in Linkage Group and Board or Committee meetings solely on behalf of the PPN, leaving any personal, business or political interests aside.
- Work openly and collaboratively with all Linkage / Thematic Group members to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc., while respecting the diversity of views expressed.
- Put forward opinions / views of Linkage / Thematic Group to the Board or Committee and feedback clearly (non-jargon) to the Linkage / Thematic Group.
- Attend relevant training or networking events organised by the PPN or the Committee.
- Be open and honest in dealings with all stakeholders.
- Build positive relationships with other Board / Committee members for the benefit of the PPN.
- Portray the PPN and the Linkage / Thematic Group in a positive and constructive way.

Time Commitment

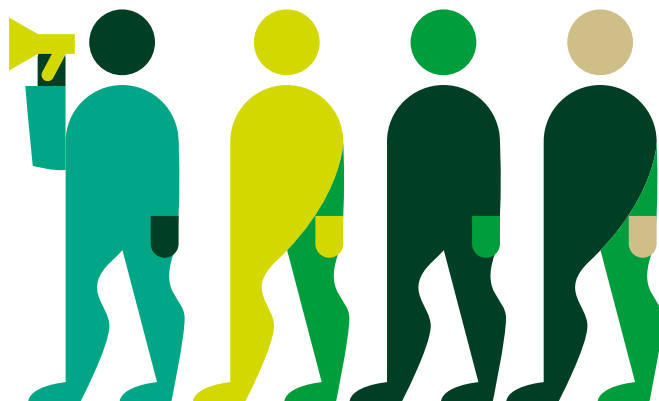
Representing the views of the PPN on a Board or Committee is one of the most rewarding aspects of joining a PPN, but it does come with a time commitment. This commitment will vary depending on the Board or Committee. The information sent out with the nomination forms for each Board or Committee should provide an approximate time commitment based on the previous experience of the PPN. This can only ever be approximate as circumstances may mean that fewer or greater number of meetings will be required.

Nominations Process

Depending on the Board or Committee, there may be differences in the process for nominating Representatives across PPNs. The following is a *sample nominations process*:

- The PPN will make a call for nominations from the Colleges/Linkage / Thematic Groups / Member Groups, giving at least 10 days' notice before the closing date for nominations. The information sent out with the nomination form will include an overview of the work of the Board or Committee concerned and an approximate time commitment for Representatives.
- Nominating organisations must be full registered members of the PPN, whose registration has not lapsed. Member Groups whose membership has lapsed should register within the notification period. It will be a matter for the PPN to decide if that Member Group can nominate.
- The Member Group must complete the Nomination Form (see Appendix 5 for sample). Only fully completed and signed Nomination Forms will be accepted by the PPN.
- Late nominations will not be accepted.
- The nominee must confirm that they understand the role of the Representative, will follow the Constitution of the PPN and the Representatives Charter and will act at all times to further the objectives of the PPN.
- Following the closing date for nominations, all nominations are reviewed and, if everything is in order, accepted by the PPN Secretariat.
 - If more valid nominations are received than seats available, an election will take place (see sample Elections Process in this Section of the Handbook).
 - If the same number of valid nominations as available seats is received, the nominee(s) will be deemed elected.
 - If less valid nominations than seats are received, the PPN may look for an interim Representative from their membership to make sure that the PPN is represented on the Board or Committee concerned. This appointment would then be sent for approval by the Plenary.
- An individual may only represent the PPN on one Board or Committee (with the exception of Secretariat members, who are permitted to hold positions on both the Secretariat of the PPN and one other Board or Committee following the usual nominations and elections process).
- Where an individual has been nominated for, and elected to, more than one seat, they must choose their preferred Board or Committee. The seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.
- Where an individual is currently a Representative on a Board or Committee and is then nominated for and elected to another seat, they must choose their preferred Board or Committee.

- Where they prefer to continue in their current Representative role, the seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.
- Where they want to take up the role on the new Board or Committee, they must resign from their current Representative role. The vacancy on that Board or Committee will then be advertised and filled by the PPN in the usual way.
- Only in exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Plenary, and on a temporary or interim basis, would an individual be allowed to sit on more than one Board or Committee.
- Representatives are nominated by Member Groups following an open and transparent nominations process. If the original nominating body no longer exists, or the Representative is no longer associated with that nominating body, the Representative will be deemed to have stepped down from the role and an alternate will be selected following another nominations process.



Elections Process

Where elections are required, PPNs may vary their processes to suit the needs of their Member Groups and the timeframes involved. The following is a *sample election process*. **The term “Member Groups” in this section refers to full Member Groups only. Associate Member Groups cannot participate in elections:**

- Elections will be free and accessible to all eligible Member Groups, in so far as is reasonably possible. It may, in some cases, be necessary to restrict elections, for example, to members of a particular College. Where restrictions are necessary, these should be transparent, with a clearly stated reason.
- Elections may be by email, online forms, post (with a FREEPOST return or stamped, addressed envelope) or other accessible means.
- All election materials will be sent by the PPN to the main contact address provided by each Member Group on registration / re-registration. It is the responsibility of Member Groups to ensure that their contact details are accurate and up to date.
- Election materials may vary between PPNs, however as a minimum should include:
 - An overview explaining what the election is for, who has been nominated (including their Member Group and College membership), and full details on how votes are to be returned and the date for return of votes.
 - A brief CV of each nominee, relevant to the election in progress (it is not intended that nominees will provide full career CVs).
 - Where applicable (e.g. for email and postal voting) ballot papers may also be provided setting out the maximum number of votes available for each ballot and how the vote should be cast (e.g. X, numerical preference etc.).
 - Where applicable, a FREEPOST or stamped, addressed envelope for the return of ballot papers.
 - At the discretion of the Secretariat, if approved by the Plenary, a list of eligible voting Member Groups per College or Linkage / Thematic Group may also be included, where voting is restricted. Eligible Member Groups are those full Member Groups (not Associate Members) who are currently registered with the PPN and whose membership has not lapsed.
 - If there is a tie, lots will be drawn and the first name pulled out will be deemed to be elected.
- A minimum of 10 days will be permitted for the return of ballot papers, unless circumstances require that voting is cast within a shorter timeframe and the Secretariat have made all reasonable effort to make sure that voting is accessible to all Member Groups.
- Where hard copy ballot papers are used, these will be stored, unopened, in a locked box until the day and time of the count, as stated on the ballot information sheet.
- The count is conducted by PPN Secretariat with candidates invited to attend and observe.

- Results are recorded in order of the highest number of votes received and a panel formed from unsuccessful candidates.
- If the elected candidate needs to step down during the term, or choose not to take up the position, the next person on the panel will take the position. All members of the panel will remain in place for one year or until the next membership re-registration date, whichever happens first.



PPN Representatives and Government Office

As well as the criteria for selection of a Representative, set out earlier in this Section, the following requirements must be met:



- Elected representatives of Local Authorities cannot be nominated through this process.
- If anyone nominated through this process then decides to enter electoral politics he/she must **immediately** resign their PPN Representative role and the relevant nominating PPN unit (Electoral College / Linkage Group) will choose a replacement.
- A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local, national or European) should not be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.
- Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated.
- All PPN representatives must meet the criteria laid down by the unit (College / Linkage Group) that nominates them to their representative role.

Election to Government office



In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN Representatives cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining a Representative of the PPN. Once a Representative decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position **immediately** before putting their name forward for nomination.

- If a Representative is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to Government office, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful before seeking election as a PPN Representative.
- Should the Representative be nominated for election, but be unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date of the election before seeking election to any PPN Representative role.
- Should the Representative have been successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before seeking election to a PPN Representative role.

Induction Training and Ongoing Support

The PPN will provide induction training to all newly appointed Representatives. Representatives who are not newly appointed but who would like to take a “refresher” course can also attend this training, subject to numbers, with preference given to those who are newly elected. If possible, training should also be made available to Local Authority officials and councillors so as to deepen their understanding of PPNs.

As a minimum, this training should cover:

- The role of the PPN on Boards and Committees
- The Role, Rights and Responsibilities of the Representative
- The Representatives' Charter
- Using the Representatives' Reporting Template

The PPN may also work together with the Local Authority to provide training specifically relating to the Board or Committee on which the Representative will sit.

The PPN will try to provide this induction training as soon as possible after the appointment of the Representative. Except in exceptional circumstances as approved by the Secretariat for ratification by the Plenary, the Representative must make sure that they attend induction training in advance of attending any meetings of the Board or Committee to which they have been appointed.



The PPN also hosts and makes use of various training sessions that may be relevant to the Representatives throughout the year as part of its Workplan. Representatives must try to attend training of relevance to them and their role on their Board or Committee.

Reporting

Reporting back to the Linkage / Thematic Group and the PPN is a mandatory requirement of PPN Representatives. A report is required from every meeting attended by the Representative in their capacity as a PPN Representative.



Reports should be received no later than two weeks following the meeting / engagement and should be in the required format (see sample Representatives Report Form in Appendix 4). The Resource Worker should also receive a copy of the completed Representatives Report for the PPN records.

If the Representative fails to attend three consecutive meetings, or to provide Reports in good time, and in the opinion of the PPN Secretariat, without good reason, they may be asked to step down from the role. The Representative may appeal this decision in line with the PPN Complaints Procedure (see Appendix 2) within 10 days.

If the appeal is unsuccessful, or no appeal has been made, the PPN will select an alternative Representative either from a panel, should one be established, or otherwise following this Section of the Handbook.

Travel and Expenses



The Travel and Expenses policy of the individual Local Authority will govern the payment of travel and expenses for attendance at a Local Authority Board or Committee meeting. All travel and expenses payments will be made in accordance with public sector norms and apply only to travel within the county for meetings or outside the county in exceptional circumstances such as training, attending the PPN conference or Secretariat Network meetings.



6

The Secretariat



The PPN Secretariat is an important part of the PPN. It is the administrative arm and takes its direction from the Plenary (all of the Member Groups).

The Secretariat is made up of Member Group representatives from each of the three Colleges (Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental). The role of the Secretariat is to make sure that the decisions taken by the Plenary, the operational decision-making body of the PPN, are carried out. They also oversee the implementation of the Strategic Plan. If the Secretariat needs to make operational decisions between Plenary meetings, they then must be approved (ratified) by the Plenary at the next Plenary meeting.

Who is the Secretariat?



How the Secretariat is made up should reflect the PPN as a whole. To comply with the Department's circular (CVSP 1/2014), the PPN Secretariat must contain at a minimum:

- one representative from each of the Municipal Districts in a county (or set geographical areas within the cities), and
- equal numbers (but at least two people) from each of the three electoral colleges (Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary).

Where vacancies occur, they should be filled as soon as possible.

People elected to the Secretariat must be nominated by a Member Group from within their own area (that is, geographical area) or College (that is, Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion or Environmental).

Only Member Groups connected with the same area or College are allowed to vote for each nominee. For example, if a candidate is nominated by a group in the Social Inclusion College in a particular Municipal District, only Member Groups who are part of the Social Inclusion College in that area can vote for them. Some PPNs may also want to appoint Secretariat members on the basis of Linkage Groups. The important thing is that the Secretariat acts on behalf of all of the full PPN - all PPN Member Groups – in carrying out its duties.

The College system makes sure that all three separate voices (Environment, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary) within the PPN can be equally represented on the Secretariat and their views can be communicated clearly.

Local Authority staff cannot be a member of the PPN Secretariat, even if they are part of a PPN Member Group.

Election to Government Office

In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN Secretariat Members cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining part of the PPN Secretariat. If a Secretariat member decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position immediately before putting their name forward for nomination.

If a Secretariat member is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to Government office, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful before seeking election to the Secretariat.

If the Secretariat member is nominated for election, but is unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date of the election before seeking election to the Secretariat.

If the Secretariat member is successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before seeking election to the Secretariat.

Role of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is an administrative body that takes its direction from the Plenary of the PPN. Its role is to:

- Help put operational decisions of the Plenary in place.
- Make sure that the PPN is working properly in between Plenaries on behalf of the Member Groups.
- Organise or help to organise the PPN activities on behalf of the Member Groups.
- Communicate regularly with all PPN Members and share information about all PPN activities as widely as possible.
- Keep correct, up to date, records of PPN business, including minutes of meetings and make sure agendas are circulated in good time.
- Be a point of contact for the PPN for the Local Authority, Department of Rural and Community Development, other PPNs, the National Advisory Group and other stakeholders of the PPN.
- Deal with all correspondence on behalf of PPN, by sending out copies and writing responses.
- Facilitate and enable the PPN Workers in their day to day activities to deliver PPN objectives of the PPN.

Nominations and Term of Office

Election of the Secretariat Members should be in line with the democratic mandate of the PPNs.



In order to really achieve participation, the PPN must make sure that Representative roles, such as the Secretariat, are refreshed regularly.



Secretariats must be refreshed at least every 3-5 years to make sure that there is a balance between the need to have some members in place with the knowledge and understanding of the work that the PPN is doing, and the need to make sure that the membership is properly represented. When the Secretariat is being refreshed, the longest-serving members must step down first to allow new voices to join. In addition, no Secretariat member should serve more than two consecutive terms.



The PPNs must separate the election cycle for the Secretariat from the local election cycle for Councillors, to ensure that an experienced Secretariat is in place when there is a need to elect new representatives to Local Authority Boards and Committees. Where this is not the case, PPNs must put a plan in place to do this as soon as possible.



Secretariat members should be nominated by Member Groups following an open and transparent nominations process. In the event that the original nominating body no longer exists, or the Secretariat member is no longer associated with them, the Secretariat member will be deemed to have stepped down from the role and an alternate will be selected following another nominations process.

Secretariat membership is valid for 3-5 years, depending on the PPN.



A provision to stagger the Secretariat term of office must be included in all PPN Constitutions. If it not currently part of a PPN's Constitution, it should be addressed as soon as possible, acknowledging that a formal amendment to the constitution and the holding of a Special General Meeting may be specifically required to do this. At least one third of a group should remain in place to guarantee continuity.

Each Secretariat should have a Rotating Chair / Facilitator, appointed from within its membership. In keeping with the Flat Structure, the role of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator should be time-limited and available to every member of the Secretariat at least once during their term of office. To make sure that every Secretariat member has the opportunity to act as Rotating Chair / Facilitator, it is recommended that this role rotate after every meeting, but at least every 6 months. Each Secretariat member who takes up the position of rotating facilitator must undergo training in the responsibilities/competencies required, such as chairing meetings and good team communications skills. Such training is to be paid for from the PPN budget.

It is important that the principles and practices of the Flat Structure (e.g. inclusion, participation, active engagement of all members, non-hierarchical) are followed no matter what title may be given to particular roles on the Secretariat, such as the title of Facilitator or Chairperson.

The role of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator is to:

- Actively facilitate meetings during their term as Rotating Chair / Facilitator.
- Make sure that agreed actions from meetings held during their term as Rotating Chair / Facilitator are put into practice on behalf of the PPN and, where necessary, approved (ratified) by the Plenary.
- Represent the Secretariat at relevant meetings and events during their term as Rotating Chair / Facilitator.
- Carry out any other necessary duties on behalf of the PPN as required.

Code of Conduct

Every PPN must have a Secretariat Code of Conduct to make sure that the Secretariat operates in an open and transparent manner and is as inclusive as possible. A sample Code of Conduct is set out in Appendix 8.



Secretariat Meetings

The Secretariat should agree an annual schedule of meetings at the beginning of each year as part of its Workplan. Meetings should be held at locations and times that are most suitable for the majority of Secretariat members.

The Secretariat should agree on the number of meetings needed each year to allow the Secretariat to deliver its Workplan. It may be necessary to have additional meetings to deal with unforeseen events that might come up, however these should be exceptional.

Attendance at Secretariat meetings is essential. If a Secretariat member fails to attend three consecutive meetings and, in the opinion of the PPN Secretariat, without good reason, they will be deemed removed from the role.



The Secretariat member may appeal this decision in line with the individual PPN Complaints Procedure (see Appendix 2 for sample).

If the appeal is unsuccessful, or no appeal has been made, the PPN will seek an alternative Secretariat member from the relevant Municipal District / College.

Induction Training and Ongoing Support

The PPN will provide induction training to all newly appointed Secretariat members. Secretariat members who are not newly appointed but who would like to take a “refresher” course can attend this training, subject to numbers, with preference given to those who are newly elected. As a minimum, this training should cover:

- The role of the PPN, its values and principles
- The Role of the Secretariat
- The Secretariat Code of Conduct
- An overview of how the individual PPN operates, its policies and procedures.



Secretariat induction training is mandatory. The PPN will endeavour to provide this induction training as soon as possible after the appointment of new Secretariat members.

The National PPN Secretariat Network

The national PPN Secretariat Network is made up of representatives from each of the 31 PPN Secretariats. This group meets to discuss best practice across the PPN network and to work collaboratively to strengthen the PPN as a whole, with an awareness and acceptance of the local and regional differences.

Travel and Expenses

Secretariat members will be paid travel and expenses in respect of representation they make in an official capacity on behalf of the PPN, outside of their capacity as PPN Representatives on a Local Authority Board or Committee.



These travel and expenses payments will be made in accordance with public sector norms and the PPN Travel and Expenses Policy (see sample at Appendix 6). Such expenses will apply only for travel within the county for PPN secretariat meetings or outside the county in exceptional circumstances such as training, attending the PPN conference or Secretariat Network meetings.

PPN Representatives on Local Authority Boards and Committees are reimbursed by the Local Authority, and not the PPN (see Section 4).

Functions of the Secretariat – Overview

The main functions of the Secretariat are administrative, carrying out duties as directed by the Plenary. These functions include:

- The development and implementation of the Strategic Plan
- Facilitating and enabling the PPN Workers in their day to day activities to deliver PPN objectives.
- Making sure that the Flat Structure is kept in place
- Promoting the PPN and Membership
- Managing the membership database of the PPN (subject to GDPR regulations)
- Overseeing elections for PPN Representatives
- Being accountable to the Plenary and carrying out their instructions

This role must be clearly defined and set out in the Constitution of the PPN. The Constitution should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is consistent with the terms of this Handbook and all Departmental circulars.



Development and Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Each PPN should have a Strategic Plan in place that covers a period, subject to annual funding allocations, of three to five years. This Strategic Plan should be developed by the Member Groups of the PPN; written up by the Secretariat and Workers; and approved by the Plenary.

The Strategic Plan is then overseen and implemented by the Secretariat on the Plenary's behalf. The Local Authority, as stakeholder and co-funder, should be invited by the PPN to input into the PPN Strategic Plan. These inputs should take account of the independence of the PPN in carrying out its work and of the PPN objectives.

Facilitating the PPN Workers

There should be a clearly defined role description for the Resource Workers and Support Workers, which is line with the implementation of the workplan and agreed at the start of the year. These role descriptions should be reviewed accordingly by the Staff Liaison Committee. The Secretariat should give clear direction to the PPN Workers on follow up actions required after every meeting and clearly communicate with the PPN Workers.

The Secretariat facilitates and enables the day to day activities of the PPN Workers in delivering the PPN objectives on behalf of the Plenary and makes sure the PPN Workers carry out their duties as set out in the PPN Workplan. Where the PPN Workers are employed by the Local Authority / Host Organisation / Support Organisation, HR and administration of payroll will be a matter for the Local Authority / Host Organisation / Support Organisation and these distinctive roles must be clearly set out in an assignment agreement.



The Secretariat oversees the work of the PPN in between Plenaries and facilitates and enables the day to day activities of the of the Resource Worker, Support Worker and any casual, part-time or Scheme staff engaged by the PPN to further its objectives. As it is not possible for up to 15 people on one Secretariat to be responsible for the day to day support of staff, each Secretariat must appoint a Staff Liaison Committee consisting of three members of the Secretariat who will directly engage with staff in respect of their day to day activities.

As soon as possible after the appointment of the Staff Liaison Committee, all three members must ensure to attend HR and management training before taking on their role as part of the Staff Liaison Committee.

When it comes to the recruitment and selection of all PPN Workers, the PPN Secretariat and, where appropriate, the Resource Worker, should be fully involved in a clear and transparent process that is appropriate to meet the requirements of the individual PPN and the associated job description.

Acknowledging that PPN Workers might be employed by a number of different stakeholders and, depending on their employment contract, have a mix of permanent and temporary contracts, it is recommended that Resource Workers and Support Workers are engaged to work with the PPN, subject to annual funding allocations, for a minimum period of 3 years where possible. This does not exclude the PPN Workers from taking advantage of other career opportunities should they present themselves and be of interest to the PPN Workers.



Each PPN must make sure that good Human Resources practices are followed, and that the PPN follows all employment regulations. This is the Secretariat's responsibility. To this end, the Secretariat should make sure that the PPN has at least the following policies in place. These policies should be signed by all Secretariat members and PPN Workers to acknowledge that they have been read and fully understood:

- Travel and Expenses Policy (see sample at Appendix 6)

- Email and Internet Usage Policy (see sample at Appendix 7)
- Grievance Procedure (see sample at Appendix 9)
- Driving for Work Policy (see sample at Appendix 10)
- Vulnerable Adults Policy (see sample at Appendix 11)
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy (see sample at Appendix 12)
- Data Protection Policy and Guidelines (sample tba)

All policies and procedures developed by the Secretariat must be approved / ratified by the Plenary.

The Secretariat is also responsible for the development of the PPN Workplan. They do this in collaboration with the PPN Workers and in consultation with the PPN Member Groups. This Workplan is then put forward to the Plenary for approval. A sample Workplan is attached to the sample Memorandum of Understanding circulated by the Department of Rural and Community Development and set out in Appendix 13.

Maintaining the Flat Structure

To maintain the Flat Structure, Secretariats must develop practical ways of working such as:

- Rotating the Chair / convenor of meetings on a regular basis. During their time as Rotating Chair / Facilitator, that person can sign documents etc. on behalf of the PPN provided always that they are mandated to do so by the Secretariat.
- Having a Rotating Chair / Facilitator / convenor group e.g. the incoming Rotating Chair / Facilitator and current Rotating Chair / Facilitator working together to guide the process. The Rotating Chair / Facilitator role should rotate after every meeting, but at least every six months, to make sure that all Secretariat members have an opportunity to facilitate.
- Setting up short-term task-based subgroups which report to the Secretariat and ultimately to the Plenary e.g. Finance, Communications, Membership, Recruitment etc.
- Regularly reassessing how these of subgroups are made up and rotating people on and off them. PPN members who are not on the Secretariat are eligible to join these subgroups if appropriate.
- Having clear processes and procedures for the PPN which are approved by the Plenary.
- Ensuring that all agendas and minutes of Plenary and Secretariat meetings as well as reports issued by PPN Representatives on Local Authority boards and committees are made available in good time on the PPN's website to ensure maximum transparency.

Promotion of the PPN and Membership

The PPNs should have as diverse a membership as possible, which reflects the volunteer-led activity in the Local Authority area and which is socially inclusive. Many organisations may be unaware of the PPN and the benefits it can bring them. The Secretariat has a role to promote membership throughout their Local Authority area.

The PPN should be proactive in promoting the benefits of community representation on Boards and Committees. At a minimum, all community representatives on Local Authority Boards and Committees must be appointed through the PPN.

PPNs should be open to new members and in particular to groups who are traditionally under-represented. Many of these groups are also targeted by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which is run by Local Development Companies, and it may be useful for the PPN to collaborate with SICAP to connect with these groups. The PPN Secretariat should also network with their Member Groups by attending training and networking events organised by the PPN.



In cases where a change to the membership criteria is proposed, the Secretariat must bring the new criteria for membership to the Plenary for approval. When a group wants to register, and it is not clear if they fit the criteria, the Secretariat can request further information from that group (the Secretariat may delegate this work to the PPN Workers).

In some cases, a category of Associate Membership may be added for groups who do not fit all the criteria. Such groups would be able to receive information and access training etc., but voting will be at the discretion of the PPN and in accordance with its Constitution.

Member Groups should be able to self-select as Community and Voluntary or Social Inclusion organisations based on the definitions provided, and be registered as part of those Colleges. In some cases, the Secretariat may offer guidance to proposed Member Groups where clarity is required.



As a requirement of the Environmental Pillar, groups who want to be categorised as part of the Environmental College must be approved by the Environmental Pillar. The Secretariat must send a list of these applicant groups, and a description of their environmental activities to Environment Pillar, MACRO Centre, 1 Green Street, Dublin 7, Telephone: 01 8780116 Email: office@ien.ie

Managing the Membership Database

Groups should re-register with the PPN at least every two years to make sure that their information is up to date. This can happen more regularly depending on the needs of the PPN. Where the PPN becomes aware that the information they have about a Member Group has changed, it should verify the correct information and update its database as soon as possible. The Secretariat and PPN Workers should work together to develop a way to re-register Member Groups that is not time consuming or administratively difficult, either on the Secretariat / PPN Workers or the Member Groups.

Each PPN should draw up a protocol for re-registration. A sample protocol is contained in Appendix 14.

The PPN contact point(s) in a member organisation are critically important for the distribution of newsletters and other information. It is preferable that contact details include an email address, however being aware that some groups may not have access to emails, validation of contact details and processes are a matter for the Secretariat, with the approval of the Plenary.

Where possible, one individual should not be the contact point for multiple groups. Because of the separation of the functions of Public Representatives and the PPN, Pillar Representatives, people with political roles (i.e. Councillors, TDs, Senators and MEPs), and Local Authority staff should not be the PPN contact point for organisations. Each PPN should use a general PPN email address (e.g. 'info@sampleppn.ie') as its key means of contact rather than an email address associated with an individual person.

To encourage active participation, Member Groups should receive regular information about the PPN, its operation and how they can get more involved.

Municipal District PPNs

The large majority of counties are now organised into Municipal Districts, where the councillors and Local Authority staff have certain powers relating to operational and maintenance works within the District. It is recommended that Municipal District PPNs be established in each Municipal District in a PPN area. This is where local decision-making happens and each PPN should have a presence in each Municipal District to make sure that the voice of the community is heard. The PPN Secretariat and PPN Workers should work with the Member Groups to encourage their participation at Municipal District level, or any other types of sub-structures in cities, by communicating the benefits of doing this in a clear and accessible way.

In cities where there is no Municipal District structure, PPNs may want to establish sub PPNs in defined geographical areas, perhaps based on Electoral Divisions or Local Area Committees of the Local Authority.

The Membership Database

The Secretariat is responsible for managing the membership database through

Salesforce (subject to complete compliance with GDPR). It may delegate its operations to a Worker or third party, but the membership database must be under the control and direction of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat must ensure that access to the Salesforce database is at all times compliant with relevant data protection legislation and that appropriate data protection policies and guidelines are in place.

Supporting the Development of a Vision for Community Wellbeing

The Vision for Community Wellbeing is intended to set out a vision for the wellbeing of the community for this and future generations. Making sure that PPNs set aside time to explore what the Member Groups want to achieve for their community, so that these aspirations can inform the PPNs' work, is an important project for the PPN. A number of PPNs have developed their Visions for Community Wellbeing and are using these to inform their work in consultations and Representative inputs. As such, this is a key part of the work of the PPNs.

The process for developing the Vision for Community Wellbeing (the Vision) is worthwhile, yet time-consuming. It involves consultations with Member Groups, online consultations, drafting and revisions before a final, robust document can be delivered for approval by the Plenary which truly reflects the views of the PPN. In supporting the development of this Vision, the Secretariat is expected to attend training on both the process used to develop the Vision and, where necessary, the facilitation skills required to facilitate consultations with Member Groups.

Members of the Secretariat should also make themselves available to review the consultation inputs and develop the draft wording for consultation.

Overseeing elections for PPN Representatives

When a Local Authority, or other agency, Board or Committee looks for a PPN Representative, they should contact the PPN Secretariat with the following details:

- Title of Board or Committee
- Function and scope of the Board or Committee
- The existing Board or Committee members
- The commitment expected from a PPN Representative e.g. time and location of meetings, participation in subgroups, becoming a company director etc.
- What skill set(s) they would like the Representative to have.
(Note: these cannot be overly restrictive e.g. "an interest in and knowledge of issues impacting on people in poverty" would be acceptable, whereas "be a qualified social care professional" may not.)
- What expenses are payable.
- Any restrictions on membership of the Board or Committee e.g. not being an employee or member of an organisation funded directly by the Board or Committee

(conflict of interest), or not being a member of another nominating sector e.g. farming, which already has representation on the Board or Committee, or coming from a particular geographical area or type of organisation. For example, a Local Link could seek a Representative from each Municipal District in a Local Authority area; a Sports Partnership could seek Representatives from different target groups e.g. older people, people with a disability etc.

- Any potential conflict of interest which could impact on a Representative's full participation on the Board or Committee.
- Any other relevant matters.

If these details are not provided, the Secretariat should request them from the Local Authority or agency looking for PPN Representation.

The Secretariat must make sure that nominations and elections for positions on Boards and Committees are carried out in a timely manner and following the processes established by the PPN, a sample of which are set out in Section 4.



In developing these processes, the following should be taken into account:

- All PPN Representatives on Boards or Committees should be nominated by (and in some cases elected by), report to and take direction from a Linkage / Thematic Group of Member Groups. They do not represent their own interests or those of their own organisation.
- The Linkage / Thematic Group structure allows for the development of a group of people within the community who have a deeper understanding of policy issues and their impact. Getting Linkage / Thematic Groups up and running, and developing them, is an essential part of the work of the PPN Secretariat.
- Representation should be spread widely in terms of gender, geography and type of organisation.
- An individual should only represent the PPN on one Board or Committee (with the exception of Secretariat members who can also represent the PPN on one Board or Committee in addition to their representation on the Secretariat). While exceptional circumstances may arise, the governing principle must be to ensure a range of Representatives.
- PPN representation is based in volunteer-led organisations and is a separate process from Government Politics e.g. TDs, MEPs, Senators, Councillors etc. Therefore:
 - Elected representatives of Local Authorities, Oireachtas members or MEPs cannot be nominated through this process.
 - A person who has put themselves forward for nomination to be elected, stood for election or who has been an elected representative on any level of government (local, national or European) cannot represent the PPN in any Representative role, including on the Secretariat, for a period of 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful, or, in the case that they were nominated, 12 months from the date of the election or, in the case that they were elected, 12 months after completing their term of office.

The Secretariat and Local Authority

The PPN is a key part of community engagement with local government structures. PPNs can support the work of the Local Authority by facilitating consultations with their Member Groups and encouraging support for relevant Local Authority initiatives where these are of benefit to their members.

Local Authority Policies

Due to the close relationship between the PPN and the Local Authority, the PPN may be impacted by some Local Authority policies. The Secretariat must engage with the Local Authority in a respectful and collaborative way, with an awareness that Local Authorities have responsibilities that must be fulfilled and policies that must be complied with in the performance of their duties (e.g. financial returns).

Memorandum of Understanding

Each PPN must agree a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Authority and other relevant organisations. This should cover key areas between both structures, provide clarity on roles and relationships and avoid duplication.

At a minimum, this Memorandum of Understanding should cover:

- Participation in decision making and representation i.e. managing elections, Representatives and Linkage / Thematic Groups, participating in consultations and other fora, developing positions on key issues etc.
- The employment, facilitation and support of PPN Workers, which requires a clear understanding in situations where the PPN Workers are employed by the Local Authority but are being supported by the PPN Secretariat.
- Recruitment and selection of PPN Workers and the role of the Local Authority and the Secretariat within this recruitment and selection process.
- Capacity Building i.e. working with Member Groups to deepen their understanding of, and participation in, the PPN; assessing training needs and offering relevant training, facilitating networking and sharing of best practice between Member Groups; developing networks etc.
- Information sharing and communications i.e. working with members, developing and maintaining a website, designing and publishing a regular newsletter.
- Other activities i.e. managing an office and staff, holding regular meetings of the Secretariat, Municipal District PPNs, Plenary, liaising with the Local Authority, managing the database, monitoring and evaluation, general administration etc.

A sample Memorandum of Understanding is set out in Appendix 13. This Memorandum of Understanding forms part of the PPN annual Workplan and should be reviewed annually to make sure that it is appropriate and relevant.

Dispute Resolution – Local Authorities

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

Any dispute that cannot be resolved locally between the PPN and the Local Authority 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 and will be final.

Hosting Arrangements

Some PPNs are hosted by organisations outside of the PPN or Local Authority structures. In these situations, the Secretariat must ensure that the following agreements are in place to set out the terms of the hosting arrangement and ensure that boundaries are clear:

- i. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Authority and the PPN in respect of the current year.
- ii. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Hosting Organisation and the PPN.
- iii. An SLA between the local authority and the Hosting Organisation.

Budget Accountability

No matter what structure the PPN is using and with an awareness of the independence of the PPNs in their work, the PPN is accountable for the spending of public money. The PPN budget must only be used for PPN work, supporting the objectives of the PPN. There must be provision in the Constitution of the PPN in relation to how PPN budgets can be spent. In spending the PPN budget, the PPN must also follow the PPN Workplan, its Strategic Plan and related Departmental Circulars.

The Secretariat is also accountable to the Plenary, the Department of Rural and

Community Development and the Local Authority in respect of the annual budget of the PPN. The initial annual allocation to each PPN from the Department of Rural and Community Development was €50,000, to be matched with at least €30,000 by the Local Authority. In recent years, additional allocation has been made by the Department of Rural and Community Development to secure an additional Support Worker post. Local Authorities will supplement the Department's allocation with an additional allocation in accordance with Departmental Circular CVSP 2/2019.



The funding allocation in respect of the Resource Worker and additional funding allocation for the recruitment of the Support Worker must be ring-fenced by the PPN for PPN purposes and not used for any other purposes.

The Secretariat should work with the PPN Workers to develop the annual PPN Budget for approval by the Plenary.

While it may be administered by another body, this budget must be under the control of the PPN. The PPN is also free to apply for further grants and funding to support additional pieces of work that are undertaken in line with the PPN Workplan. Where the PPN funding is being held in a bank account operated by the Local Authority, the Local Authority may ask for expenditures to be vouched by the PPN in accordance with the standard financial procedures in place in that Local Authority. The Local Authority cannot request information outside of these financial operating procedures or look to influence how the PPN spends its budget. Where a dispute arises, it will be referred to mediation with each of the PPN and the Local Authority paying for all associated costs equally from within their own resources.

The allocation of funding to the PPN is based on assurances by the PPN that it has a robust budgeting process in place and a clear line of accountability and decision-making at Plenary level. The Secretariat should approve budget-related matters following these policies.

The Secretariat and the Department of Rural and Community Development

In addition to funding, the Department of Rural and Community Development also provides support to PPNs on operational matters through Departmental circulars.



The Secretariat must ensure that these Departmental Circulars are circulated to everyone that may be impacted by them or need to be aware of them and that the PPN is fully compliant with them. If the Secretariat is unsure about what is meant by the Department in any of its circulars, it should seek clarification as soon as possible from the Department. If the Department issues a new circular, the PPN should ensure that any required changes are made to its governing documentation which must be then ratified at the next Plenary.

7

The PPN Workers



Every PPN has a Resource Worker (although different titles may apply in different PPNs, the term 'Resource Worker' is used throughout this Handbook). The role of the Resource Worker is to support the Secretariat and the Plenary and to carry out duties and tasks on behalf of the PPN following the PPN Workplan. Since 2019, the Resource Worker in most PPNs is also supported in their work by a Support Worker. The Resource Workers and Support Workers (collectively, the PPN Workers) can be employed by the Local Authority, the Hosting Organisation or by a special-purpose PPN Support Company.

The day to day activities of the PPN Workers are facilitated and enabled by the Secretariat on behalf of the Plenary. In doing so, it is important that good HR practices are followed.



A Staff Liaison Committee must be established, made up of three members of the Secretariat, to directly engage with the PPN Workers and support them in their role. The members of this Staff Liaison Committee must receive HR training before taking up their position on the Staff Liaison Committee.

Regardless of how the PPN Workers are employed, they work on behalf of the PPN only and should familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures applicable to their PPN.

Some PPN Workers employed by the Local Authority may have a line management structure within that Local Authority. As the PPN is independent of the Local Authority in the performance of its role, any line management structure should be limited to HR issues and cannot impact on or influence the operation of the PPN or the performance by the PPN Workers of their PPN duties. For the duration of any assignment to the PPN, PPN workers must not be assigned or asked to undertake duties outside of this role without prior consultation and agreement of the PPN.

Where the PPN takes on trainees, Tús workers or other Scheme workers, they must make sure that these workers have access to training and capacity building opportunities in their role, are fully aware of the policies and procedures operated by the PPN and are supported in their work.



The Role of the PPN Worker

The roles of the Resource Worker and Support Worker are as set out in their job descriptions.

The main functions of the Workers are to support the:

- development of the Strategic Plan
- promotion of the PPN
- the capacity building, networking and information provision needs of PPN Member Groups
- PPN Representatives on Boards and Committees
- PPN Secretariat
- PPN to liaise with the Local Authority to further the PPN agenda
- PPN work at a national level

Development of the Strategic Plan

Each PPN should have a Strategic Plan in place that covers a period, subject to annual funding allocations, of three to five years. This Strategic Plan should be developed by the Member Groups of the PPN; written up by the Secretariat and Workers; and approved by the Plenary.

Promotion of the PPN

The PPN should proactively promote the benefits of community representation on Boards and Committees. The PPN Workers play a key role in this promotion.

Provision of Support to Member Groups

Maintaining the Membership Database

The day to day operation of the Membership Database may be delegated by the Secretariat to the PPN Workers. The Secretariat must make sure that the PPN Workers are provided with training in respect on how to operate the database used to manage PPN membership, on data protection to make sure that their use of the database complies with the law, and make sure that Data Protection Guidelines are in place.

Training and Capacity Building

A key support provided by the PPNs is the provision of training and capacity building opportunities to Member Groups. The PPN Workers should develop and circulate a Training Needs Analysis to the PPN Member Groups to establish what training needs

they may have at least every two years. This Training Needs Analysis should focus on the main objective of the PPN – the needs of the Member Groups to allow them to participate in local policy decision-making. The PPN Workers may also become aware, through the course of their work, of other training needs that the Member Groups might have.

The PPN Workers should try to source training and capacity building opportunities for Member Groups based on a training budget agreed during the development of the PPN Workplan and approved by the Plenary. Training should be free or low-cost to Member Groups. The PPN is not responsible for meeting all training needs identified by its Member Groups. There are a range of training programmes on offer within the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors.

Information Provision

The provision of information and support on areas of relevance to the Member Groups is one of the main reasons a group may become a member in the first place. Information on funding opportunities will be of particular interest to Member Groups.

As the main contact points, the PPN Workers will be likely to receive this information first and must distribute it to the PPN Member Groups in a timely manner.

To support Member Group engagement, the PPN Workers will develop a report for the Plenary on the work of the PPN since the date of the last Plenary meeting.

Consultation Supports

As well as supporting the PPN Representatives elected by the PPN to represent them on Local Authority Boards and Committees, the PPN also facilitates its Member Groups to have their say in a range of consultations of importance to them. Notifications of these consultations will usually come from the PPN Workers who will then decide how they should be facilitated. This work can be very time consuming and will largely depend on the support of the Secretariat and Plenary.

Depending on the consultation, this may be:

- Circulation of an online form
- Requesting written submissions by post / email / an online form developed by the PPN Workers specifically for the consultation
- Holding consultation events with Member Groups

The Workers will be the most likely to notice where “gaps” in engagement arise, i.e. marginalised groups who may have difficulty accessing IT to make online submissions or who may have literacy / numeracy difficulties or who, because of previous experiences, may be reluctant to engage with official processes. The PPN Workers are therefore key to making sure that all PPN Member Groups can participate effectively.

Each PPN must have a Constitution in place to govern its activities. This Constitution must be developed by the PPN in consultation with its Member Groups and

approved by the Plenary. The PPN Workers should support the Secretariat to review the Constitution regularly to make sure that it is consistent with the terms of this Handbook, all Departmental Circulars and the PPN objectives.

Supporting the Development of a Vision for Community Wellbeing

The Vision for Community Wellbeing is intended to set out a vision for the wellbeing of the community for this and future generations. Ensuring that PPNs set aside time to explore what the Member Groups want to achieve for their community, in order that these aspirations can inform the PPNs' work. A number of PPNs have developed their Visions for Community Wellbeing and are using these to inform their work in consultations and Representative inputs. As such, this is a key part of the work of the PPNs.

The process for developing the Vision for Community Wellbeing (the Vision) is worthwhile, yet time-consuming. It involves consultations with Member Groups, online consultations, drafting and revisions before a final, robust document can be delivered which truly reflects the views of the PPN. In supporting the development of this Vision, the PPN Workers are expected to attend training on both the process used to develop the Vision and, where necessary, the facilitation skills required to facilitate consultations with Member Groups.

PPN Workers should also make themselves available to review the consultation inputs and develop the draft wording for consultation.

Municipal District PPNs

The large majority of counties are now organised into Municipal Districts, where the councillors and Local Authority staff have certain powers relating to operational and maintenance works within the District. It is recommended that Municipal District PPNs be established in each Municipal District in a PPN area. This is where local decision-making happens and each PPN should have a presence in each Municipal District to make sure that the voice of the community is heard. The PPN Secretariat and PPN Workers should work with the Member Groups to encourage their participation at Municipal District level, or any other types of sub-structures in cities, by communicating the benefits of doing this in a clear and accessible way.

In cities where there is no Municipal District structure, PPNs may want to establish sub PPNs in defined geographical areas, perhaps based on Electoral Divisions or Local Area Committees of the Local Authority.

Provision of Support to PPN Representatives

Elections and Appointments

The Resource Workers and Support Workers play an important role in the nomination and election processes for the Representative roles. As the main point of contact, they organise the nomination processes, make sure the information is sent to the Member Groups in enough time to make their nomination (where such information is provided to the PPN Worker), organise the ballot if an election is required, and communicate at all stages in the process to the Secretariat and the Member Groups.

Induction Training and Supports

The PPN Workers also arrange the induction training schedule for the newly appointed Representatives, in addition to induction training arranged by the Local Authority Board or Committee.

They also support PPN Representatives throughout their term of office. This means making sure that the PPN Representatives have access to the relevant information before their meetings, have access to the Representatives Reporting Template (see sample at Appendix 4) and are reminded to complete the template if this is not completed within a reasonable timeframe.

Provision of Support to the PPN Secretariat

Acknowledging that the Secretariat is made up of volunteers who are part of Member Groups and have a voluntary role on the Secretariat, with all of the obligations and responsibilities that goes along with that, the PPN Workers also provide key supports to the Secretariat. This role may vary between PPNs but, in general, the PPN Workers will provide supports with

- Elections and Appointments
- Induction Training and Supports
- Provision of Relevant Information
- Developing the Annual PPN Budget
- Developing the Workplan
- Producing the Annual Report
- Developing the Strategic Plan

Elections and Appointments

The PPN Workers play a key role in the nominations and elections processes for the Secretariat. As the main point of contact, they organise the nominations processes, make sure information is sent to the Member Groups in good time to facilitate nominations, and oversee the process of appointments. They also arrange the Plenary meetings at which the Secretariat is elected and approved.

Induction Training and Supports

The PPN Workers arrange the induction training schedule for the newly appointed Secretariat members and make sure that they are supported in their work. This includes making sure that all new Secretariat members can access the policies and procedures of the PPN, providing some supports in organising Secretariat meetings and supporting the Secretariat in the development of the PPN Workplan.

Provision of Relevant Information

The PPN Workers will likely be the first point of contact for a range of stakeholders and their networking will provide them with useful information on areas of importance to the PPN. Much of this information will be of relevance to the Secretariat and the PPN Workers should make sure that the Secretariat are kept informed and up to date to allow them to carry out their duties. The Resource Worker may also be asked to provide financial and operational reports to the Secretariat at their meetings.

Developing the Annual PPN Budget

The PPN Workers should work with the Secretariat to develop the annual PPN Budget for approval by the Plenary and in accordance with the PPN Constitution, its objectives, its Workplan, its Strategic Plan and Departmental Circulars.

Developing the Workplan

The Secretariat is responsible for the development of the PPN Workplan and develops it in consultation with the Local Authority, in collaboration with the PPN Workers and consultation with Member Groups. This Workplan is then put forward to the Plenary for approval.

The PPN Workers must support the Secretariat to develop this Workplan and to make sure that it is capable of being presented to the Plenary in good time to be approved or amended before its implementation.

Producing the Annual Report

The job descriptions for both the Resource Workers and the Support Workers provide for general duties as required by the PPN to make sure it operates effectively. These duties include, but are not limited to, supporting the Secretariat to complete the Annual Report return on a timely basis. It is essential that these returns are completed and returned by the given deadline as not doing this can impact funding allocations.

Developing the Strategic Plan

Each PPN should have a Strategic Plan in place that covers a period, subject to annual funding allocations, of three to five years. This Strategic Plan should be developed by the Member Groups of the PPN; written up by the Secretariat and Workers; and approved by the Plenary.

Liaising with the Local Authority

One of the PPN's key relationships is with the Local Authority. The PPN is the route for all community representation on Local Authority Boards and Committees, it is also a key channel for Local Authority consultations. PPNs can support the work of the Local Authority by facilitating consultations with their Member Groups and encouraging support for relevant Local Authority projects where these are of benefit to their members.

Grants available from the Local Authority are of interest to PPN Member Groups. The Local Authority will provide the PPN with information about these grants, and the PPN Workers will distribute this information to the PPN Member Groups. The PPN Workers should not be asked to administer these grants on behalf of the Local Authority as this would impact on the independence of the PPN.

Some PPN Workers will be recruited and employed by the Local Authority, however when they are assigned to the PPN, they are facilitated and enabled in their day to day duties by the Secretariat to further the PPN objectives. The terms of this arrangement should be set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between the PPN and the Local Authority and should be clearly stated in any assignment arrangement that is in place. Insofar as possible, and subject to budgetary provision, the assignment arrangements should cover a specific period (three years is suggested) in order to provide continuity to the PPN in terms of PPN workers while recognising that some events are outside the control of the assigning organisation.

The PPN Budget

Local Authorities are co-funders of the PPN. The PPN is accountable to the Local Authority in the spending of public money. This means that the PPN budget can only be used to support the work of the PPN in accordance with the PPN objectives, the PPN Constitution, its Workplan, its Strategic Plan and Departmental Circulars. It does not entitle the Local Authority to prior approval of expenditure items, otherwise than in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the PPN and the Local Authority, if applicable.

Liaising with the Department of Rural and Community Development

In addition to funding, the Department of Rural and Community Development also provides support to PPNs on operational matters through Departmental circulars. The PPN Workers must support the Secretariat to make sure that these circulars are available to all who need to be aware of them and that the PPN complies with them. If the Secretariat or the PPN Workers are unsure as to what is meant by the Department in any of its circulars, they should seek clarification as soon as possible from the Department.

Working at national level

PPN Workers, while primarily engaged to work within their own Local Authority geographical areas, will also have the opportunity to work at a regional or national level with colleagues, for example as part of the PPN National Advisory Group, at the National Ploughing Championships, organising and attending the National PPN Conference, and participating in national-level projects and committees from time to time. Transitioning from local to regional or national-level engagement allows the PPNs to use their collective experience and expertise to input into policies and strategies that directly affect them, their communities and their Member Groups.

Resource Workers are encouraged to participate in the National Resource Workers Network, where they will gain peer-to-peer support, shared learning and advice on best practice developments.

Election to Government Office

In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN workers cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining in their post. If a PPN worker decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position immediately before putting their name forward for nomination.

If a PPN worker is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to Government office, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful before applying for a PPN worker role again.

If the PPN worker is nominated for election, but is unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date of the election before applying for a PPN worker role again.

If the PPN worker is successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before applying for a PPN worker role again.



The National Resource Worker Network

The National Resource Worker Network is made up of representatives from each of the 31 PPNs. This group meets to discuss best practice across the PPN network and to work collaboratively to strengthen the PPN as a whole, with an awareness and acceptance of the local and regional differences.

PPN Workers are also encouraged to engage and collaborate at regional level to informal structures.

Travel and Expenses



PPN Workers will be paid reasonable travel and expenses for meetings and other work-related activities that take place outside their home/usual place of work. Such expenses will be paid in accordance with public sector norms and the PPN Travel and Expenses Policy (see sample at Appendix 6) and only where these expenses are not recoupable from another sources (e.g. from attending a local authority meeting, in which case expenses should be met by the LA).

8

The Local Authorities



The relationship with the Local Authority is one of the key relationships of the PPN. It is through representation on Local Authority Boards and Committees that the PPN can fulfil its core objective of supporting its Member Groups to participate in local government decision-making. Many of the PPN Workers are also employed by the Local Authority. It is important that this relationship works well for both the PPN and the Local Authority and that any issues can be dealt with quickly and locally, as much as possible.

To progress the work of the PPN, the Local Authorities and PPNs must work together and engage meaningfully with each other to their mutual benefit. The PPN is the primary way that Local Authorities get inputs for consultations with their communities and PPNs play a key role in supporting the development of each Local Authority area.

Positive relationships between PPN and the Local Authority are essential for success. This should be a relationship based on equality and partnership, respectful of each other's boundaries and the independence of the PPNs. PPNs can support the work of the Local Authority by collaborating on consultations with their Member Groups and encouraging support for relevant Local Authority initiatives where these are of benefit to their members.

Each PPN and Local Authority should draw up a clear Memorandum of Understanding to govern the operations and funding of the PPN, and to provide clarity on the boundaries of each party (see sample Memorandum of Understanding at Appendix 13).

Key issues to be covered in the Memorandum of Understanding are that:

- PPNs are independent from the Local Authority, i.e. neither the PPN as a whole or the PPN Workers are answerable to the Local Authority in the carrying out their PPN work.
- Each Local Authority has a responsibility to support the PPN to maintain its independence and to ensure that it maintains appropriate boundaries. This is particularly the case where the PPN Workers are employed by the Local Authority.
- Throughout the Local Authority, public participation must be seen as an important and valued element of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This cannot be solely confined to the Community Section.
- The proper procedure is followed when submitting reports or returns concerning the PPN.

All Local Authority staff, but particularly those in direct contact with the PPN, should receive induction training so that they are familiar with the PPN structures and Workplan. Training should also be made available to elected representatives (i.e. councillors, TDs) so that they are more informed about the roles, functions and activities of PPNs.

To make sure that the PPN runs smoothly and to develop the relationship between the PPN and the Local Authority, it is recommended that the relevant personnel from both the PPN and the Local Authority meet at least twice per year to discuss areas of mutual interest and concern.

The PPN Budget

The initial annual allocation to each PPN from the Department of Rural and Community Development was €50,000, to be matched with at least €30,000 by the Local Authority. In recent years, additional allocation has been made by the Department of Rural and Community Development to fund an additional Support Worker post. It is expected that the Local Authority will supplement the Department's allocation with an additional funding allocation in accordance with Departmental Circular CVSP 2/2019.

Local Authorities are co-funders of the PPN. The PPN is accountable to the Local Authority in the spending of public money. This means that the PPN budget can only be used to support the work of the PPN in accordance with the PPN objectives, the PPN Constitution, its Workplan, its Strategic Plan and Departmental Circulars. It does not entitle the Local Authority to prior approval of expenditure items, otherwise than in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the PPN and the Local Authority, if applicable.

The funding allocation in respect of the Resource Worker and additional funding allocation for the recruitment of the Support Worker must be ring-fenced by the PPN and not used for any other purposes.



While it may be administered by another body, this budget must be under the control of the PPN. The PPN is also free to apply for further grants and funding to support additional pieces of work that are in line with the PPN Workplan. Where the PPN funding is being held in a bank account operated by the Local Authority, the Local Authority may ask for expenditures to be vouched by the PPN in accordance with the standard financial procedures in place in that Local Authority. The Local Authority cannot request information outside of these financial operating procedures or look to influence how the PPN spends its budget. Where a dispute arises, it will be referred to mediation with each of the PPN and the Local Authority paying for all associated costs equally from within their own resources.

The Memorandum of Understanding sets out the terms under which the PPN and Local Authority will work together. There may be circumstances in which the Local Authority may have additional requests for the PPN and vice versa. Fulfilling these requests will be a matter for the PPN / Local Authority concerned, having an awareness of the current workload of each and their respective Workplans. Neither the Local Authority nor the PPN are permitted to request a fee for these additional requests.

Where the PPN is hosted by a third party Host Organisation, the Local Authority will enter into a Service Level Agreement with that Host Organisation, setting out the terms and conditions attached to the provision of funding by the Local Authority to the Host Organisation in respect of the PPN. In some cases, the Local Authority will also enter into a Service Level Agreement directly with the PPN.

Sample Service Level Agreements are set out in Appendix 15.

PPN Staff and Recruitment

When it comes to the recruitment and selection of all PPN Workers, the PPN Secretariat and, where appropriate, the Resource Worker, should be fully involved in a clear and transparent process that is appropriate to meet the requirements of the individual PPN and the associated job description.

Acknowledging that PPN Workers might be employed by a number of different stakeholders and, depending on their employment contract, have a mix of permanent and temporary contracts, it is recommended that Resource Workers and Support Workers are engaged to work with the PPN, subject to annual funding allocations, for a minimum period of 3 years. This does not exclude the PPN Workers from taking advantage of other career opportunities should they present themselves and be of interest to the PPN Workers.

In many cases, the PPN Workers were recruited and employed by the Local Authority. On the establishment of the PPN, these Workers were assigned to work for the PPN, often continuing to work in the same area as their former colleagues. This can understandably cause confusion and PPN Workers can sometimes be asked to do work on behalf of the Local Authority outside the scope of their current job description (as Resource Worker or Support Worker). It is essential that the boundaries of this assignment, and the independence of the PPNs, are respected by all. The PPN has a large volume of work and the PPN Workers must be allowed to dedicate their time to that work in accordance with their roles.

Continuity is important for the PPN to function properly, as much of the work is based on forming relationships and building networks. Unless otherwise requested by the PPN Worker, the Local Authority should do its best, subject to annual funding allocations, to make sure that the PPN Workers remain in their role and are not reassigned within the Local Authority for a minimum of 3 years. If opportunities become available to the PPN Worker through the Local Authority, they may choose to avail of them through the usual open contest.

Local Authority Boards and Committees

When a Board or Committee seeks a Representative, they should contact the PPN Secretariat with the following details:

- Title of Board or Committee
- Function and scope of the Board or Committee
- The existing Board or Committee members
- The commitment expected from a PPN Representative e.g. time and location of meetings, participation in subgroups, becoming a company director etc.
- What skill set(s) they would like the Representative to have. (Note: these cannot be overly restrictive e.g. “an interest in and knowledge of issues impacting on people in poverty” would be acceptable, whereas “be a qualified social care professional” may not.)
- What expenses are payable.
- Any restrictions on membership of the Board or Committee e.g. not being an employee or member of an organisation funded directly by the Board or Committee (conflict of interest), or not being a member of another nominating sector e.g. farming, which already has representation on the Board or Committee, or coming from a particular geographical area or type of organisation. For example, a Local Link could seek a Representative from each Municipal District in a Local Authority area; a Sports Partnership could seek Representatives from different target groups e.g. older people, people with a disability etc.
- Any potential conflict of interest which could impact on a Representative’s full participation on the Board or Committee.
- Any other relevant matters.

Rights and Responsibilities of Boards and Committees

The way in which the Committee conducts its business has a huge impact on the effectiveness of PPN representation. An open facilitative style can make it easy for all members to participate and contribute. The following rights and responsibilities are generally within the remit of the Chair or Chief Officer (or equivalent).

Responsibilities of the Board or Committee

- To draw up and communicate clear terms of reference and procedures / standing orders and a vision for the Board or Committee.
- To hold regular meetings at times, dates and locations that facilitate, as far as possible, the participation of volunteers. Ideally these dates should be set for the calendar year.
- To hold an induction meeting and have an induction pack for new members

- to explain the processes and procedures of the Board or Committee.
- To set the agenda in consultation with members and to enable members to put items on the agenda.
 - To give at least one month's notice of meetings and to circulate the agenda and any documentation for reading at a minimum of two weeks in advance of meetings. This is to allow PPN Representatives to consult with their Linkage / Thematic Group before the meeting and to make sure that PPN Representatives have enough information to make informed comments and decisions.
 - To chair the meeting in an open and transparent way. To enable and value the contribution of all members and foster a culture of active listening. This should include giving enough time for discussion and deliberation of agenda items, and if required setting up subgroups to bring recommendations to the main Board or Committee. Decisions should be made in an open and transparent way.
 - To make sure that any conflicts of interest are clearly stated and dealt with appropriately.
 - To include all points of discussion within the minutes insofar as possible and within the limits of confidentiality and data protection. This does not mean that every word discussed is minuted, but that every discussion point is properly noted.
 - To produce an Agreed Outcomes Statement or minute at the end of each meeting which can be shared with the Linkage / Thematic Group.
 - To pay travel and other expenses to PPN Representatives in a timely manner and in accordance with the Local Authority's standard Travel and Expenses policy (a copy of which should form part of the Representative's induction pack).
 - To offer relevant training to all members and to provide support to members in understanding technical documents.
 - To review the workings of the Board or Committee on a regular basis and to consider any recommendations made following this review.

Obligations of PPN Representatives as members of LA Boards and Committees

- Members will attend meetings, or assign an alternate (where possible) to attend in their place.
- Members will prepare thoroughly for meetings, and contribute fully.
- Members will feed back to their PPN Linkage / Thematic Groups and take direction from them.
- Members will play a full role in the workings of the Board or Committee including participation in subgroups, consultations etc.
- Members will be open and honest in their dealings with the Board or Committee, declaring any conflicts of interest.

The Vision for Community Wellbeing and the Local Authority

The Vision for Community Wellbeing is intended to set out a vision for the wellbeing of the local community for this and future generations. It is developed in consultation with Member Groups following an extensive and comprehensive consultation process. A number of PPNs have already developed their Visions for Community Wellbeing and are using these to inform their work in consultations and Representative inputs. As such, this is a key part of the work of the PPNs.

The process for developing the Vision for Community Wellbeing (the Vision) involves consultations with Member Groups, online consultations, drafting and revisions before a final, robust document can be delivered which truly reflects the views of the PPN.

The Vision consists of six domains:

- Health (Physical and Mental)
- Economy and Resources
- Social and Community Development
- Participation, Democracy and Good Governance
- Values, Culture and Meaning
- Environment and Sustainability

Given the diversity involved, and the extent of the consultations, the Vision can provide a template to feed in to the Local Economic and Community Plans for each Local Authority area. The Local Authority should work with the PPN after the development of its Vision to collaborate on consultations which align to the Vision so as to minimise duplication of effort and “consultation fatigue”.

Independence and Accountability

Although working closely with the Local Authority, the PPN is a distinct and independent network. Maintaining this independence is critical to the integrity of the PPN and to the trust of its Member Groups. The PPN and the Local Authority will develop and maintain a good working relationship along the lines detailed in this Section.

As a co-funder, the Local Authority is a key stakeholder in the PPNs and the PPN is accountable to the Local Authority in respect of the financial governance in the spending of public monies.

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.

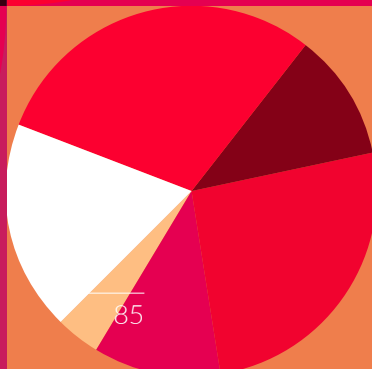
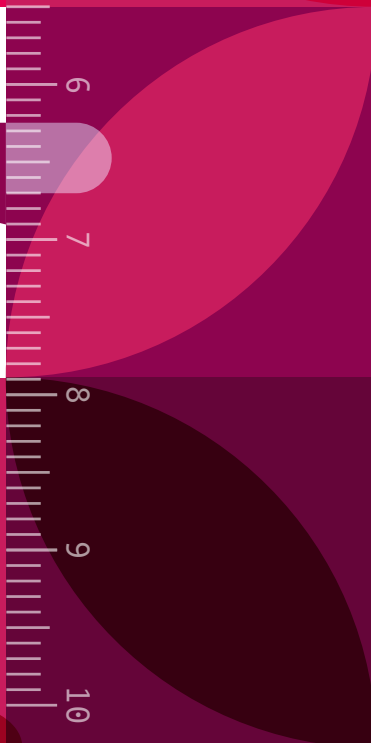
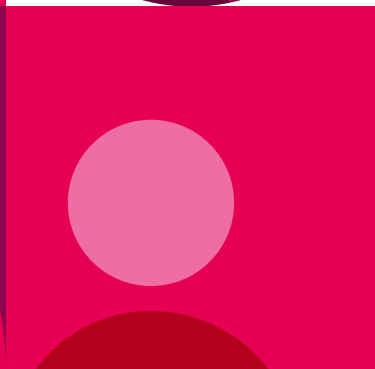
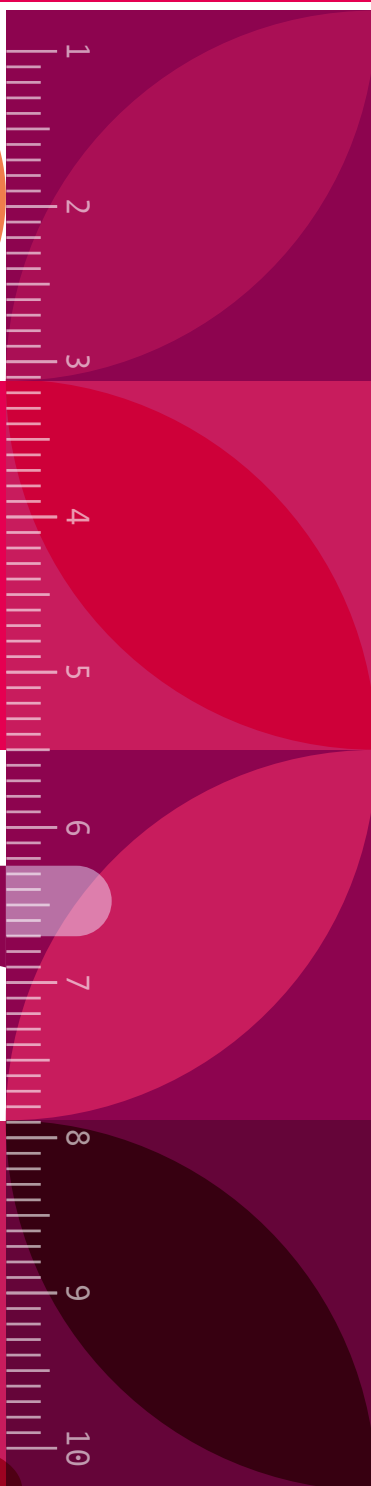
Any dispute between the PPN and the Local Authority which cannot be resolved locally will be referred to mediation to be facilitated by an independent mediator. The mediator will be chosen by agreement between the Secretariat and the Local Authority. If no agreement can be reached in respect of a mediator, 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.



9

The PPN National Advisory Group



The Working Group Report on Citizens Engagement with Local Government recommended that the work of PPNs should be monitored and evaluated regularly in line with best practice. It is the role of the PPN National Advisory Group to provide this monitoring and evaluation function. A working group of the PPN National Advisory Group is also responsible for overseeing the organisation of the Annual PPN Conference. The PPN National Advisory Group:

- a. Develops key performance indicators for PPNs in conjunction with the Department.
- b. Analyses and discusses local progress and liaises with the Department on addressing priority issues identified.
- c. Monitors progress on the development and implementation of PPNs across the country to ensure consistency of implementation across Local Authority areas.
- d. Where inconsistencies are identified, makes proposals on how these issues can be resolved.

Membership of the PPN National Advisory Group comprises of:

- One representative each from the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors,
- Three PPN Secretariat representatives , one each from the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors,
- Three PPN Resource Workers,
- Two Local Authority staff (at least one at Director of Service level and one directly supporting a PPN) and
- an official of the Department (Chair) while secretariat services are also be provided by Department staff.

Membership of the group may be expanded as and when required.

To make sure that the National PPN Advisory Group is fully representative of the various PPN stakeholder groups, the Group's members are nominated, elected or chosen in a fully open and democratic way. The process of seeking nominations is left to each sector/stakeholder group to determine. The only requirements that the Department have are that, whatever process is adopted, it be inclusive, transparent and fair, and that nominated individuals are willing and available to take up a position on the National PPN Advisory Group. Members of the PPN National Advisory Group are appointed for a three-year term.

The PPN National Advisory Group meets at least 4 times per year, typically once per quarter. Agenda and minutes are circulated to members within two weeks of a meeting. Additional meetings will be organised if required. Relevant community organisations and other stakeholders may be invited to attend at meetings of the PPN National Advisory Group to provide information only.

Along with its monitoring role, the PPN National Advisory Group also advises and supports the Department to develop the PPNs.

10 Department of Rural and Community Development



The Department of Rural and Community Development (the Department) has overall responsibility for the oversight and development of the national PPN network. It provides a range of supports to the PPNs and strives to ensure best practice is maintained and supported. The main roles for the Department are:

- Funding of the PPNs
- Promotion of the PPNs
- Quality Assurance
- Acting as Final Arbiter in disputes between the PPN and the Local Authority
- Supporting Best Practice

Funding of the PPNs

The initial annual allocation to each PPN from the Department of Rural and Community Development was €50,000, to be matched with at least €30,000 by the Local Authority. In recent years, an additional allocation has been made by the Department of Rural and Community Development to fund an additional Support Worker post, supplemented by additional funding by the Local Authorities in accordance with Departmental Circular CVSP 2/2019.

The funding allocation in respect of the Resource Worker and additional funding allocation for the recruitment of the Support Worker must be ring-fenced by the PPN and not used for any other purposes.

This funding is allocated on the basis that every PPN will ensure best practice in their financial procedures, and will have an agreed process in place, consistent with public procurement guidelines and approved by the Plenary, for non-salary expenditures and has a clear decision-making process.

Promotion of the PPNs

The Department ensures that the PPNs are actively promoted across Government and State Agencies and that Government Departments are aware of the potential of the PPNs to engage in local and national consultations. One example of this is the positioning of the PPNs in the *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024*.

Quality Assurance

The Department acts as Chair of the PPN National Advisory Group and works with stakeholders on that Group to provide best practice supports to all PPNs.

The Department has developed a range of circulars to support best practice in PPNs. Adherence to these circulars is mandatory on the PPNs and forms part of the Department's decision-making process in reviewing funding allocations.



The Department may, from time to time, conduct audits of the PPNs to review practices and support quality assurance. These audits are conducted on the basis of random sampling. The PPNs will be notified in advance of the audit.

Final Arbiter

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.

Supporting Best Practice

The Department has supported the development of a range of supports for PPNs in conducting their work:

- The PPN Handbook
- The PPN Annual Report
- The Toolkit for the development of a Vision for Community Wellbeing
- Departmental Circulars
- The Strategy in support of Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities.
- Training supports



11 Developing a Vision for Community Wellbeing



The Vision for Community Wellbeing Statement is intended to set out a vision for the wellbeing of individual communities and future generations. PPNs need to set aside time to explore what the Member Groups want to achieve for their community so that these aspirations can inform the PPN's work. A number of PPNs have developed their Vision for Community Wellbeing and are using this to inform their work in consultations and representative inputs at meetings of various Boards and Committees. As such this is a key part of the work of the PPNs.

The process for developing the Vision for Community Wellbeing is worthwhile, but time-consuming. It involves consultations with Member Groups, online consultations, drafting and revisions before a final, robust document can be delivered which truly reflects the views of the PPN. In supporting the development of this Vision, the PPN Workers and Secretariat members are expected to attend training on both the process used to develop the Vision and to acquire facilitation skills necessary to facilitate consultations with Member Groups. They must then arrange suitable times and venues to hold the consultation meetings, be involved in reviewing the consultation inputs and drafting the draft Vision for online inputs before completing the final version of the Vision which will form a cornerstone for policy inputs by the PPN.

The Toolkit for the development of the Vision for Community Wellbeing is presented as an open access, web-based library of resources and can be found [at this link](#). This format was identified as most appropriate for reasons of cost-effectiveness and sustainability. Materials accessed on the internet can be widely and freely available and be easily updated or amended as necessary. They are also downloadable.



An overview of the PPN Wellbeing Process is presented in the PowerPoint presentation “**PPN Community Wellbeing Process – Outline and Toolkit Materials**”.

Users can go through the process in this presentation and at each stage links are provided to the relevant resource materials that have been produced.

The resources on the Vision website also explain what is involved for the PPN in undertaking the process and the website can be used to introduce and explain the process, as a coordinating manual to it, and a reference point for resource materials.

Developing a Vision for Community Wellbeing that is truly reflective of the PPNs, their Members, and their communities requires a time commitment, and support from all stakeholders, particularly the PPN Secretariats. Every PPN should have a Vision for Community Wellbeing which allows for a local, regional and national profile to be created, so that PPNs can empower communities to come together to build more sustainable societies.

Benefits of Developing a Vision for Community Wellbeing

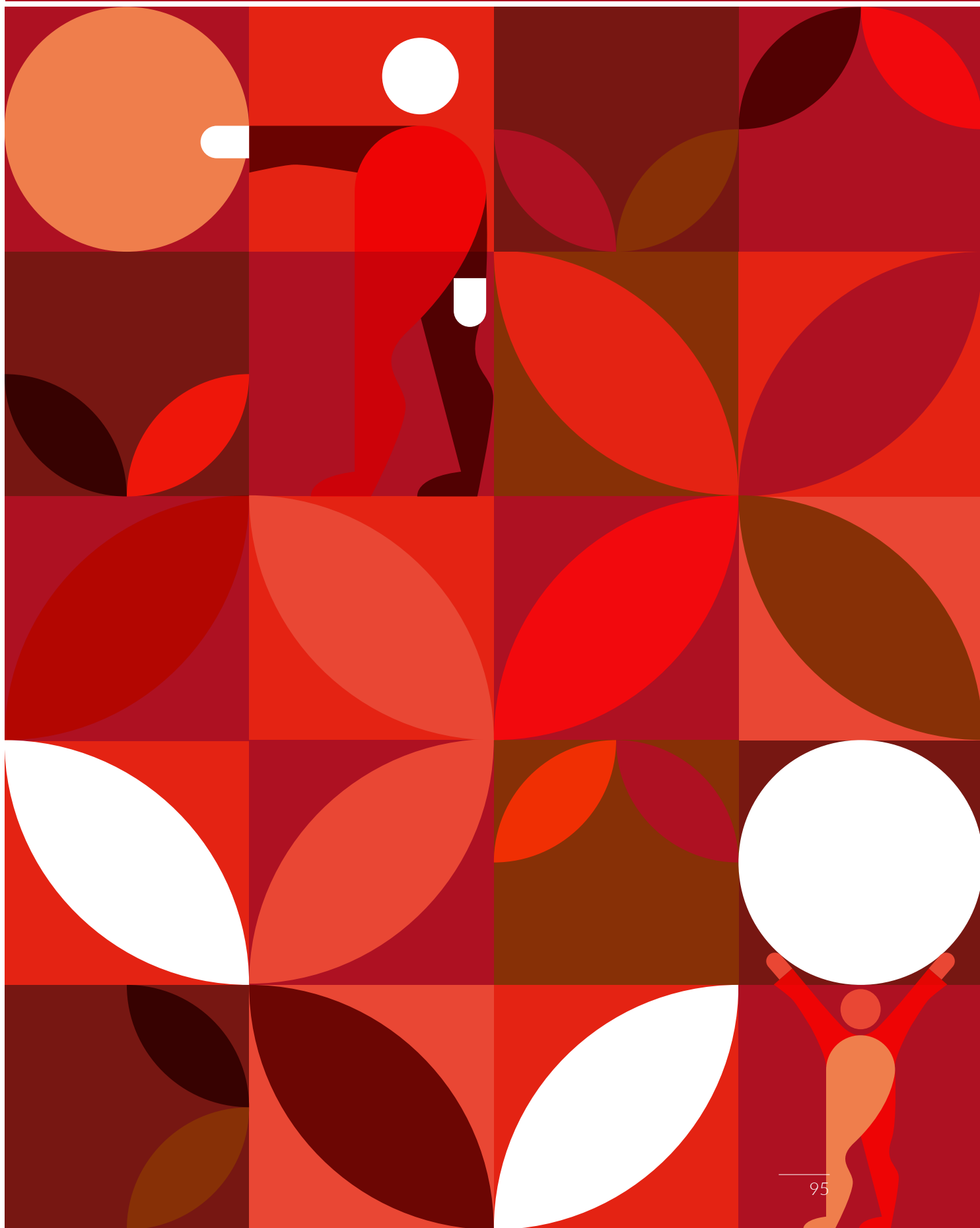
Feedback from the PPNs that have participated in this process to date suggest that they found the experience of developing Wellbeing Visions rewarding both for the quality of content of the Visions themselves, and also as a process that delivers enhanced capacity within the PPN.

PPNs who participated in the Pilot phase spoke of the following benefits gained from this process:

- increased understanding of project management;
- greater appreciation of the value of detailed planning for consultations;
- the potential of using consultations to generate original and high quality outputs; and
- the development of facilitation skills amongst those that participated in the Pilot phase.



12 Evaluation of the PPN



It is important that the PPN evaluates its structures, operations and performance at least annually. Structures and operations should be consistent with the terms of this Handbook and the Departmental Circulars. A sample Evaluation Checklist for this purpose is set out in Appendix 16.

Evaluating the performance of the PPN will depend on the individual Workplan of each PPN. Each PPN should consider:

- the inputs provided – financial, human resources, physical,
- the outputs, and
- the outcomes for each area of work.

Based on the outcomes, it will then be possible to estimate the impact of that piece of work on the community, the PPN and / or its Member Groups. These outcomes and impacts should also be reviewed against the objectives of the PPN as a whole to make sure that these objectives are being met, and that they remain relevant and applicable to the PPN and the needs of its Member Groups.

There are various organisations who can support PPNs to develop these evaluation systems. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of these organisations within this Handbook, as to do so would unfairly prejudice selected organisations and risk excluding others. PPNs engaging organisations to conduct such evaluations must do so in line with the public procurement guidelines.

Appendices



Many of the following Appendices were provided by PPNs during the consultation for this Handbook. These are intended to support PPNs to create their own suite of policies and documents to suit their individual circumstances. In developing any policies and guidelines, PPNs are advised to ensure that these are consistent with the operational Sections of this Handbook, the Departmental Circulars and best practice.

Sample Constitutions

(i) Hosted (by third party) PPN – Short

{NAME} Public Participation Network

{MISSION STATEMENT}

Summary

{NAME} Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in July 2014 as the representative voice for all Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in {NAME}.

The Public Participation Network will identify the issues that matter and try to influence policy in a way that improves the quality of life and opportunities for people within the Local Authority area of XX.

Membership of the Public Participation Network is open to all community and voluntary groups, clubs and organisations in {NAME}, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community.

The Public Participation Network is overseen by a Secretariat of 12 members elected by full member groups of the network.

The Public Participation Network elects representatives to committees and organisations to speak on behalf of all member groups of the network.

The Public Participation Network is the main link through which LOCAL AUTHORITY and other decision-making bodies in the Local Authority area connect with the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors.

{NAME} Public Participation Network is committed to working in an open, inclusive and transparent manner on behalf of all member groups.

{NAME} Public Participation Network

1 NAME

The name of the organisation is {NAME} Public Participation Network (PPN).

2 MISSION STATEMENT

{NAME} Public Participation Network is the collective voice for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in {NAME}, its purpose is to improve people's well-being by involving the community in local decision-making.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF {NAME} PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

The aims and objectives are as follows:

- 3.1 To provide an open, inclusive and transparent representative structure for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in {NAME};

- 3.2 To consult with the community so as to encourage and enable public participation in local decision-making and planning of services;
- 3.3 To facilitate the selection of community representatives onto decision-making bodies and to support those representatives to be effective in their roles;
- 3.4 To foster, in particular, the inclusion and empowerment of groups and organisations with a focus on tackling disadvantage and social exclusion including rural isolation;
- 3.5 To support the member groups of {NAME} Public Participation Network so that: they can develop their capacity to do their work more effectively; they can participate effectively in PPN activities; they are included and their voices and concerns are heard;
- 3.6 To support a process that will feed a broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals from PPN member groups into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers;
- 3.7 To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and efficient information exchange between environmental, community and voluntary and social inclusion groups and between these groups and XX Council and other decision-making bodies;
- 3.8 To ensure that the views expressed by PPN representatives are mandated by {NAME} Public Participation Network member organisations;
- 3.9 To promote and make known {NAME} Public Participation Network and its aims and objectives, particularly to potential members;
- 3.10 To develop and promote the Public Participation Network so that the work of the PPN is clearly recognised, acknowledged and understood by local decision-making bodies and the PPN has a strong community voice within the Local Authority area of XX;
- 3.11 To contribute to LOCAL AUTHORITY's development and achievement of a {NAME} Vision for the well-being of this and future generations.

4. PRINCIPLES OF {NAME} PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

{NAME} Public Participation Network and its member organisations are committed to the following principles and practices:

- 4.1 Working with a community development approach to address issues of all our member groups and issues of social exclusion;
- 4.2 Maintaining open, inclusive and transparent organisational structures;
- 4.3 Being accountable to the member groups;
- 4.4 Acting as a vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies reflecting the diversity and range of views of member groups ;
- 4.5 Implementing and abiding by best practice governance structures;
- 4.6 Working in a collective and supportive way with all member groups.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF {NAME} PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

Membership of {NAME} Public Participation Network is open to any community and voluntary group or club, environmental group and any organisation addressing issues of social exclusion, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community within {NAME}. Applications for membership will be considered by the Secretariat of {NAME} Public Participation Network;

{NAME} Public Participation Network is made up of full member groups and associate member groups. The PPN will support Associate Member Organisations to fulfil the criteria for full membership;

Criteria for Membership

- 5.1 Member Organisations should be in existence for at least one year, should have at least six registered members, should have a committee and should hold an AGM;
- 5.2 Member Organisations must agree with the aims, objectives and principles set out in Sections 3 and 4;
- 5.3 Member Organisations must carry out their activities in an open and transparent manner;
- 5.4 Member Organisations must have a base in and/or be active in {NAME} and
- 5.5 Member Organisations must complete and return a membership application form, together with their constitution and minutes of their most recent AGM;
- 5.6 Because of the separation of the functions of public representatives and the PPN, councillors, TDs, Senators, and MEPs should not be the PPN contact point for member organisations (Ref: Section 6 of the PPN Handbook)
- 5.7 Organisations, which at the time of application, meet all other criteria except some element(s) of sections 5.1 and/or 5.4 may apply for Associate Membership;
- 5.8 Associate Member Organisations do not have the power to make nominations, or have voting rights, however they can put forward motions;
- 5.9 An organisation's membership of the PPN may be reviewed by the {NAME} Public Participation Network Secretariat if at any time the organisation claims to speak on behalf of/or represent the PPN without mandate;
- 5.11 A member organisation shall cease to be a member of the PPN if the organisation no longer qualifies under the conditions laid down for membership.

The following are not eligible for membership of {NAME} Public Participation Network:

- State or semi-state bodies;
- Local development agencies;
- Groups who have representation through other pillars of social partnership e.g. trade unions, farming and business organisations.

The Director of Community, Cultural and Social Development in LOCAL AUTHORITY and his/her nominees shall support the operation of {NAME} Public Participation Network, and may attend PPN meetings and contribute to discussions, however they shall not have voting rights.

6. PLENARY MEETINGS

The Plenary (all the member organisations together) is the key decision maker of the PPN on operational issues, meeting at least twice a year. This should be not later than 15 months from the preceding Local Authority area Plenary. The Local Authority area Plenary is the main decision-making body of the Public Participation Network.

- 6.1. Member Organisations must be given at least 21 days' notice of a Plenary Meeting.
- 6.2. Notice of a Plenary Meeting should include details of any elections that will be taking place (see Section 11).
- 6.3. The quorum for a Plenary Meeting shall be 15 full member groups (i.e. a minimum of 15 persons representing 15 separate Full Member Organisations).
- 6.4. An Extraordinary Plenary Meeting (EPM) may be called by the Secretariat or by notice in writing by 10 Full Member Organisations. At least 14 days' notice shall be given of an Extraordinary Plenary and the notice must contain a specification of the business to be discussed at the meeting.
- 6.5. As the Public Participation Network develops, Plenary meetings will be arranged at a Municipal District level. The notice period for a Municipal District Plenary shall be the same, however the quorum shall be 6 full members (i.e. a minimum of 6 persons representing 6 separate Full Member Organisations).

7. SECRETARIAT

{NAME} Public Participation Network will be overseen by a Secretariat of {NUMBER} members elected by full member organisations at a Local Authority area Plenary meeting. The Secretariat is a flat structure (i.e. there are not elected officers). Meetings will be chaired on a rotational basis.

The purpose of the Secretariat will be:

- 7.1 To ensure the aims and objectives of the {NAME} Public Participation Network are met;
- 7.2 To ensure that member groups are informed of developments relevant to their groups;
- 7.3 To represent member group' interests;
- 7.4 To ensure the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenary meetings;
- 7.5 To facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary
- 7.6 To support the Resource Worker to achieve the PPN's objectives through the implantation of the Annual Workplan;
- 7.7 To develop {NAME} Public Participation Network into an effective collective voice for community groups in the Local Authority area.
- 7.8 To engage with the PPN Representatives as laid out in the PPN Representatives Charter

8. SECRETARIAT MEETINGS

- 8.1 The Secretariat will meet every two months or as deemed necessary.
- 8.2 The quorum for Secretariat meetings is half or more of the current members.
- 8.3 If after 30 minutes from the scheduled starting time, a quorum is not present the meeting shall stand adjourned to a date to be determined by the Secretariat.
- 8.4 If at an adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within 30 minutes from the appointed start time, the members present shall be a quorum.
- 8.5 The Secretariat will strive to make decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, those present will make decisions by way of a simple majority vote.
- 8.6 Where possible all reports given at Secretariat meetings and general meetings should be written and circulated in advance.
- 8.7 The appropriate method of reporting for some meetings may be verbal.

9. REPRESENTATIVES – CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITIES

{NAME} Public Participation Network elects representatives to sit on committees and organisations on behalf of all member organisations of the network. To be eligible for election as a representative of {NAME} Public Participation Network a person must be:

- 9.1 An active member of a {NAME} Public Participation Network Full Member Organisation;
- 9.2 Nominated by their Member Organisation;
- 9.3 Committed to the aims, objectives and principles of {NAME} Public Participation Network;
- 9.4 Willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant body that he/she is to sit on;
- 9.5 Willing to be representative of all member organisations of {NAME} Public Participation Network, effectively acting in the interest of the PPN as a whole;
- 9.6 Willing to uphold, support and defend the policies, decisions and position of {NAME} Public Participation Network;
- 9.7 Able to articulate, discuss, debate and negotiate on behalf of {NAME} Public Participation Network;
- 9.8 Readily contactable by other member organisations.

Representatives of {NAME} Public Participation Network will seek to:

- 9.9 Promote understanding of the issues and difficulties facing the community sector;
- 9.10 Present the views and policies of {NAME} Public Participation Network to the meeting and ensure that they are taken into account in the decision-making process;
- 9.11 Bring issues of relevance to the community sector back to {NAME} Public Participation Network for the information of all groups in the form of a written report,

- 9.12 Advise {NAME} Public Participation Network of issues which require a response, formulation of policy or other action;
- 9.13 Receive instruction from {NAME} Public Participation Network (through a Linkage Group/ Thematic Network (see Appendix 2), Plenary meetings, or the Secretariat) as to how the PPN should be represented;
- 9.14 Attend {NAME} Public Participation Network Plenary Meetings, relevant Linkage Group/ Thematic Network (see Appendix 2) meetings and joint meetings between the Secretariat and PPN representatives;

10. CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE SECRETARIAT MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESIGN THEIR POSITION

Secretariat Members and Representatives would be required to resign their position if they:

- 10.1 Are no longer a member of the {NAME} Public Participation Network Member Organisation that nominated them;
- 10.2 No longer have the formal support of their nominating Member Organisation;
- 10.3 Fail to attend three consecutive meetings of the Secretariat and/or committees they were elected to without reasonable explanation;
- 10.4 Declare as a candidate for local, general or European elections.

11. ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS AND VOTING

- 11.1 Nominations for {NAME} Public Participation Network representative roles and seats on the Secretariat shall be invited through electronic communication with member groups.
- 11.2 When the number of nominations received exceeds the number of seats available a ballot will take place.
- 11.3 Each Full Member Organisation shall be entitled to one vote only and must have a representative present to cast that vote.
- 11.4 Individuals can only represent and vote on behalf of one Full Member Organisation at any Plenary meeting.

12. ELECTIONS TO THE SECRETARIAT

There are 12 seats on the Secretariat, which must be filled as follows:

- 12.1 Full Member Organisations from each of the municipal districts of the Local Authority area elects a representative from their area (the municipal districts in AREA are NAME);
- 12.2 Full Member organisations which operate on a Local Authority area-wide basis, or across more than one municipal district elect one representative;
- 12.3 Full Member Organisations from each of three electoral colleges: Community and Voluntary; Environmental and Social Inclusion elects two representatives;

- 12.4 Election is for a maximum term of three years (the Plenary may decide on a shorter term);
- 12.5 No person may serve more than two consecutive terms on the Secretariat;
- 12.6 {NAME} Public Participation Network will strive to achieve a gender balance on the Secretariat;
- 12.7 To help prevent loss of all experience from the group at one time, it is preferable if the Secretariat is renewed in line with Section 6 of the PPN Handbook.
- 12.8 Members of the Secretariat who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms on the Secretariat.
- 12.9 Should a member of the Secretariat be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, the Secretariat shall contact full member groups of the relevant Municipal District or College seeking nominations for a new representative, who may be elected at a Plenary meeting, or agreed through electronic correspondence.

13. ELECTION OF PPN REPRESENTATIVES

A current list of {NAME} Public Participation Network representative positions is shown in Appendix I.

- 13.1 The criteria for and responsibilities of representatives of {NAME} Public Participation Network are set out in Section 9.
- 13.2 Representatives of {NAME} Public Participation Network will initially be elected at a Plenary meeting, and as Linkage Groups/Thematic Networks (see Appendix 2) are formed, by the relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network;
- 13.3 Election is for a maximum term of three years (the Plenary or the Linkage Group/Thematic Network (see Appendix 2) may decide on a shorter term);
- 13.4 Should a representative be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, the Secretariat shall contact the relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network (see Appendix 2) seeking nominations for a new representative, who may be elected at a meeting of the Linkage Group/Thematic Network, or agreed through electronic correspondence with the Linkage Group/Thematic Network.
- 13.5 Members of the Secretariat of {NAME} Public Participation Network may be elected to a representative role.
- 13.6 It is preferable that a person would hold only one PPN representative role, and a representative may not hold both a seat on the Local Community Development Committee and a Strategic Policy Committee, or seats on two Strategic Policy Committees.
- 13.7 Representatives of {NAME} Public Participation Network who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same role.

14. FINANCES

- 14.1 {NAME} Public Participation Network finances will be overseen and monitored by the Secretariat and will be hosted by a {NAME} Community Organisation with an agreed Memorandum of Understanding and in line with their financial policy, however the Secretariat shall operate robust financial controls with regard to all income and expenditure.
- 14.2 True accounts shall be kept of all sums of money received and expended by the PPN and accounts will be made available to all members prior to the Plenary Meeting.
- 14.3 The PPN may introduce an annual member group fee at the Plenary Meeting sufficient to cover costs associated with the work of the organisation. If this arises, there will be a differential rate for funded and non-funded organisations.

15. AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

- 15.1 Any Member Organisation may put forward a motion to amend the Constitution.
- 15.2 Motions to amend the Constitution must be made in writing to the Secretariat 14 days in advance of a Local Authority area Plenary Meeting.
- 15.3 Member Organisations must be informed of any motions to amend the Constitution at least 7 days in advance of a Local Authority area Plenary.
- 15.4 Motions to amend the Constitution must be discussed at a Local Authority area Plenary Meeting and shall require a two-thirds majority of Full Member groups present and entitled to vote;
- 15.5 The Secretariat will ensure that a formal review of the {NAME} Public Participation Network constitution will take place at least every 3 years.

Appendix I

{NAME} Public Participation Network currently has representation on the following bodies, and will deal with requests from other groups for community representation should they arise:

LIST BODIES AND SEATS

Appendix II

Explanation of Terms

Social Inclusion College

A Social Inclusion Organisation is one whose main activity is working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected. It does not include formal education (schools colleges), or large institutional health or social service providers.

Environmental College

Environmental Organisation is one whose primary objectives and activities is environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability and includes Green Communities Groups that work to empower community groups to improve their local environment, enhance biodiversity and reduce their resource usage and local Environmental Action Networks that work to promote the well-being, protection and enhancement of the environment.

Community & Voluntary College

A Community & Voluntary Organisation is one whose primary activity is other than social inclusion or environmental protection and/or environmental sustainability and amongst others covers groups working in the following areas: community development; tidy towns; arts and culture and sport.

Linkage Group /Thematic Network

Community Linkage Groups/Thematic Networks are made up of community groups who have registered an interest in a particular issue or committee. They offer an opportunity for groups to come together, network, exchange ideas, get informed, discuss important issues affecting the community and feed into policy making.

Secretariat

The Group elected by the PPN to coordinate the activities of the PPN and communicating and disseminating information with the PPN membership

Plenary

A Plenary is a meeting of all the groups registered with the PPN

Municipal District

There are {NUMBER} municipal districts/areas in {NAME} and they are:

LIST MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

(ii) Where PPN hosted by Local Authority – Long with Policies

1. PREAMBLE

Section 127 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 which came into effect on 1st June 2014 has restructured the relationship between Local Communities and Local Authorities and between Local Authorities and Local Communities. Section 46 of the 2014 Act outlines the New “Framework for Public Participation at Local Government Level”.

The Public Participation Network is a formal network and is the main link through which the LOCAL AUTHORITY engages with the Local Communities and the Local Communities with the LOCAL AUTHORITY.

The participation of all citizens in public life and discourse and their right to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities is at the centre of democracy.

The purpose of the PPN is to enable citizens to take an active role in the policy making and oversight activities of the LOCAL AUTHORITY’s areas of responsibilities. The PPN is the mechanism through which Community representation is provided on committees of the LOCAL AUTHORITY, such as:

- Strategic Policy Committees
- Local Community Development Committee
- Joint Policing Committee
- other authorities and committees outside of the LOCAL AUTHORITY remit

with the number of representatives to be elected onto each agreed with LOCAL AUTHORITY or the receiving body.

Community groups or organisations who wish to participate must register with the PPN.

2. NAME

The name of the organisation shall be NAME Public Participation Network otherwise referred to as NAME PPN or the PPN.

3. AIMS

The aims of the NAME PPN shall be to:

- Represent the Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary Sector’s interests of NAME on Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for LOCAL AUTHORITY (Core Function).
- Participate in and contribute to the Development of the Vision of LOCAL AUTHORITY for the:
 - Well-being of this and future generations.
 - Social, Cultural, Technological and Economic Development of the NAME Area.
- Proactively promote the benefits and advantages of Community Representation on Boards and Committees.

- Ensure that all community-based organisations and groups in NAME Area are aware of the work and existence of the PPN.
- Ensure that all community-based organisations and groups in NAME are aware of the Nomination Process to structures within the PPN.
- Ensure that all Community Sector representation on all LOCAL AUTHORITY sponsored Bodies are selected via the NAME PPN.
- Facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between the various segments of the Community (environmental, social inclusion community and voluntary groups) and between these groups and the Elected Members and Staff of LOCAL AUTHORITY.
- Ensure that all relevant Information of LOCAL AUTHORITY is circulated to the PPN.
- Identify issues both of individual and collective concern and advocate to influence policy locally and nationally in relation to these issues.
- Monitor and Evaluate existing Policies of LOCAL AUTHORITY for impact, outcome and output on the Community.
- Actively support the inclusion of socially excluded groups or communities experiencing high levels of poverty, discrimination or disadvantage and to facilitate their participation at local and Local Authority area level and to clearly demonstrate same.
- Ensure that the Sectors both individually and collectively always act professionally and have a strong collective Voice within the NAME Area and on relevant National Structures.
- Support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that they can develop their own capacity and perform their work more effectively, participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities, and ensure their voices and concerns are listened to and included in relevant Policy Proposals.
- Uphold this constitution.

4. MISSION, VISION, VALUES and PRINCIPLES

4.1 Mission

- The Mission of NAME Public Participation Network is to enable the Community of NAME to:
- Take an active role in the policy making and oversight activities of LOCAL AUTHORITY's areas of responsibilities.
- Influence improved decision making in the Local Authority area, and
- To be the main link through which LOCAL AUTHORITY engages with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

4.2 Vision

That NAME PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all NAME economic, social, community and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.

4.3 Values

NAME Public Participation Network is:

- **Inclusive:** We accept all volunteer-led organisations in AREA. We actively seek to include groups who may feel that they are not usually welcomed or listened to.
- **Participatory:** We encourage our members to get involved in all aspects of the operation of the PPN. We welcome all feedback and ideas about how we can do better.
- **Independent:** We are independent of LOCAL AUTHORITY and any vested interests. We have our own staff. We manage our own budget, and our opinions are not influenced by anyone other than our members.
- **Valuing of diversity:** We know that the NAME PPN is made up of groups with many different opinions. We do not expect that all our members will agree on everything. But we will always feedback the diverse range of views our members have.
- **Transparent:** We are open about everything we do. We try to have fair and clear policies and procedures. We communicate our activity with all our members on a regular basis.
- **Respectful:** We respect all individuals involved in the PPN. We value the dignity of each person. We treat people how we would like to be treated.

4.4 Principles

NAME Public Participation Network is:

- **Accountable:** to its members by implementing and abiding by good Governance structures, policies and procedures.
- **Democratic:** in its process.
- **Committed:** through its participation and engagement to attend all meetings and report back to its membership.
- **Communicative:** In a clear, concise, simple and timely manner utilising modern technology as appropriate with all members.
- **Supportive:** of new and inexperienced members to develop their skills and capacity.
- **Proactive:** In circulating all relevant information to the PPN membership.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Full Membership

5.1.1 Full Membership Criteria

Full membership of NAME PPN is open to community groups and organisations who:

- Have an address in NAME and are volunteer led (i.e. voluntary Board or Committee who are directly responsible for the organisation or group).
- Are not for profit, non-political and non-sectarian organisation.
- Are independent.
- Have at least three (3) members and are open to new members.
- Are in existence for at least six (6) months.
- Have an appropriate governance structure (formal structure) with an agreed:
 - Set of rules/financial procedures.
 - Meet regularly at least quarterly.
- Are National Organisations if they are headquartered in NAME or through their Local NAME Branch (the local branch shall be eligible to vote and hold the representative position).
- Complete the NAME Community County Register Registration Form.

The PPN may seek copies of relevant documentation to validate membership.

5.1.2 Term of Membership

Once an organisation has become a member of the PPN they shall be required to reaffirm their membership details every two years prior to the Annual General Plenary Meeting in that year.

5.1.3 Registration Process

- Prospective members register through filling out the NAME Community County Register form. The NAME Community County Register is a partnership between and co-managed by the PPN Secretariat and the LOCAL AUTHORITY Community Development Office.
- The County Register form can be filled out on the PPN website or a hard copy may be requested from the PPN or LOCAL AUTHORITY.
- The County Register form is used to register groups for the purpose of membership of the PPN and for the purposes of accessing supports and funding from LOCAL AUTHORITY.
- County Register Forms are processed by the PPN Secretariat through its staff who assess eligibility for membership and ensure the appropriate Electoral College has been chosen (i.e. Community, Environment and Social Inclusion).

5.2 Associate Membership

Associate Membership provides a pathway and a link between key community groups and organisations and services in NAME who are excluded from Full Membership, to have a voice on matters of interest.

5.2.1 Rights of Associate Membership

Associate members can:

- Attend the PPN training and events.
- Attend Linkage Groups and Plenary and contribute to discussion; however voting rights

are not extended to Associate members.

- Receive information – newsletters, meeting minutes, etc.

5.2.2 Associate Membership Criteria

Associate membership of NAME PPN is open to groups and organisations not eligible for full membership but who:

- Engage with or support the PPN.
- Are a valid community group, organisation or service.
- Work is related, supportive or similar fields to that of the PPN or its members.
- Agree to comply with PPN policies and constitution.
- Have a Branch, Group, Association, etc. established in NAME for at least one year.

Organisations who may qualify for Associate Membership include but not limited to:

- Local Development Companies.
- University Departments or research centres, colleges, other third level groups or associations.
- Charitable trusts and Foundations.
- Other Civil society, voluntary and community organisations.
- Other NGOs.

5.2.3 Associate Membership Registration Process

The process of registering for associate membership is the same as that outlined in section 5.1.3 above.

5.3 Membership Electoral Colleges

The PPN Membership is divided into three (3) Colleges. Each organisation or group must decide to participate in the “college” which represents their primary interest:

5.3.1 Social Inclusion

The main aim or activity of our social inclusion members is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are:

- marginalised in society;
- living in poverty; or
- living with unemployment.

Social inclusion members work to develop and build sustainable communities. They aim to build communities that promote the values of equality and inclusion and that have respect for human rights.

They focus on working with the most marginalised, including but not limited to: disadvantaged young people, ethnic minorities, homeless people, older adults, Travellers, people with disabilities, substance misusers, or women.

5.3.2 Environmental

The main aim of environment members is to protect or sustain the environment. The national environmental pillar decides what type of groups can be members of the NAME environmental pillar.

Environment members work on building sustainable communities and achieving a sustainable future. Their work can include: developing organic horticulture, environmental education, preventing the spread of invasive species, protecting wildlife, recycling, resource efficiency, and sustainable planning.

5.3.3 Community and Voluntary

The main aim or activity of community and voluntary members is to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of their community. The community and voluntary college is the largest and most diverse of the three PPN colleges.

Volunteers are essential to the sustainability of community and voluntary member groups. The types of groups in this college may include: active citizenship, arts, community safety, drama, emergency services, festivals, heritage leisure, residents' associations, sports or youth.

6. STRUCTURE and MANAGEMENT

The PPN structure is "flat" which means all members of the PPN have an equal voice and an equal input into decision making in accordance with Government Policy. The structure is composed of:

- Plenary Group
- Secretariat
- Linkage Groups

It is therefore imperative that strong and clear governance procedures are in place that respect the flat structure and provide the environment for the PPN to conduct its business in an efficient, effective, and accountable manner.

6.1 Plenary

- The full Membership (excluding Associate Members) is referred to as the Plenary which is the Governing Body with overall responsibility for the Network and shall meet at least twice (2) a year in Plenary Session. The first session of the year includes the Annual General Meeting of the Membership.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects a Secretariat which through the diversity of its membership is representative of the three (3) colleges, where vacancies have arisen.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects representatives to the Local Community Development Committee, where vacancies have arisen.
- At least one (1) member from each registered group or organisation holding Full Membership shall be entitled to attend and shall have one (1) vote on behalf of their organisation.
- The dates for convening Plenary Sessions shall be decided by the Plenary in session at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary and in the absence of such decision, by the Secretariat.
- Notice of Plenary Sessions shall be circulated to all members not less than one month prior to the date of such Session.

- The Agenda shall be set by the Secretariat. Items and motions for discussion shall be forwarded by members at least 10 days prior to the meeting.
- All Plenary Sessions shall be conducted under Standing Orders Procedures – in consultation with members. See Appendix 1 for Standing Orders (page 126).

6.1.1 Extraordinary General Meetings

Extraordinary General Meeting of full Members shall be held at any time on the decision of the Secretariat or on receipt by the Secretariat of a concise request of not more than one (1) A4 page signed by 30 full Members (excluding Associated Members) to convene such a meeting. Instructions on supports available to gather signatures are available in Appendix 2.

The Secretariat shall decide within five (5) working days of receipt of such request the date, time, and place such a meeting shall be held which shall be not more than twenty-one (21) working days following receipt of the request by Secretariat.

The Notice to members shall state:

- Date, time and place of the meeting.
- Business to be transacted.
- Text of original request or proposal.

The Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Secretariat for the time being shall act as the Chair of the Extraordinary General Meeting or where the Rotating Chair / Facilitator fails to act the Secretariat shall appoint one of its Members to act as Chair. Where the Secretariat fails to appoint a Chair, the Extraordinary General meeting shall appoint a Chair by show of voting paddles or Ballot by simple majority vote. Only votes or eligible members attending are permitted.

Where the Secretariat fails or omits to comply with such request to hold a meeting or Secretariat has resigned in block, then the member organisation who initiated the request in the first instance shall convene such an Extraordinary meeting at a date, time, and place stipulated by them and only on the original request and such notice shall state the Business to be transacted and Text of original request or proposal.

A poll demanded regarding the election of a Chair for the meeting by any member shall be taken forthwith.

All Extraordinary General Meetings shall be conducted under Standing Orders Procedures – in consultation with members. See Appendix 1 for Standing Orders (page 126).

6.2 Secretariat

- The Secretariat consists of twelve (12) members. At each Annual General Meeting – one third (1/3) of members are required to step down. Length of service in their current term on the Secretariat determines who shall step down, with the Longest Serving Members stepping down each year. Members having stepped down may offer themselves for re-election. If the Number is not four (4) or a multiple of four (4) then the number nearest one-third shall step down.
- A member may not serve on the Secretariat for more than six (6) consecutive Years and

having so served shall not be entitled to offer themselves for Election for a further three (3) years. In total, a member shall not serve more than a total of nine (9) years.

- The quorum for Secretariat meetings shall be one third plus one (1).
- For membership of the Secretariat, an individual must be attached to and nominated by a PPN member organisation of a relevant electoral college. The Electorate for that position is comprised of the members of the Electoral College.
- A panel shall be compiled from the next highest candidates for the purpose of filling vacancies which may occur in the Secretariat in respect of that college between Annual General Meetings of the PPN.
- Any Vacancy arising on the Secretariat between the Annual Electoral Process shall be filled by the next highest candidate on the aforementioned panel willing to serve on the Secretariat.
- Secretariat shall meet at least nine (9) times per annum – monthly – with no meetings in June, July and December.
- Secretariat Members shall attend the two (2) Plenary Sessions in the year.
- The Secretariat shall hold ordinary meetings at location around the Local Authority area to be decided by the Secretariat.
- Any member elected to the Secretariat who fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings of the Secretariat shall automatically remove themselves from that position and the Vacancy arising shall be filled forthwith by the next available member on the panel as set out above.
- The Secretariat shall have authority to fill any temporary vacancy being 3 months or more arising from a member being absent on – Leave of Absence, Study Leave, Maternity Leave, etc.

6.2.1 Emergency and Other Meetings of the Secretariat

Emergency meetings of the Secretariat shall be held where not less than seven (7) members of the Secretariat sign a request that the Secretariat be convened setting out clearly the reasons for such a meeting. Such a request shall be sent to the Rotating Chair / Facilitator responsible for the operation of Secretariat. On receipt of such request the Rotating Chair / Facilitator shall immediately arrange for the holding of the meeting within seven (7) days of the date of such receipt.

Other meetings of the Secretariat shall be held where the Rotating Chair / Facilitator is of the opinion that a situation has arisen for the holding of such a meeting.

6.2.2 Responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is the key day-to-day administrative body within the PPN Structure. It:

- Ensures the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenary meetings and in accordance with the constitution.
- Manages the PPN budget including on-going financial matters and decisions.

- Ensures that PPN processes work, as far as practicable, in accordance with this Constitution and in an efficient and effective manner.
- Manages the development and implementation of the PPN's strategic plan.
- Establishes sub-groups to address in detail certain defined matters that arise from time to time.
- Facilitates the implementation of decisions of the Plenary.
- Ensures appropriate administrative support is available for the efficient functioning of the PPN, including considering recruiting support through work placement schemes funded by public monies.
- Determines the time and place of AGM (Plenary) unless otherwise directed by Plenary.
- Cooperates with any National Advisory Group established for Monitoring and Evaluation of PPN's recommendations or guidelines issued by such groups.
- Agrees an Annual Work Plan with the LOCAL AUTHORITY namely:
 - Participation in Decision Making and Representation.
 - Capacity building.
 - Information Sharing and Communication.
 - Other activities as agreed.
- Engages with the LOCAL AUTHORITY Community Development Office regarding the Council's oversight responsibility.
- Appoints a Rotating Chair / Facilitator of Secretariat Meetings with a term of 6 months (i.e. Plenary to Plenary). The position of Rotating Chair / Facilitator should rotate to ensure Secretariat members acquire relevant experience of this function. The Rotating Chair / Facilitator's successor should be selected prior to the Plenary meeting at which the Rotating Chair / Facilitator steps down.
- Manages the work of the Resource Worker, who acts as the secretary of the Secretariat, and who maintains the minutes, correspondence regarding all Secretariat meetings and Plenaries.
- Reviews and approves the minutes of each previous meeting as the first item of the agenda of each Secretariat meeting.
- Promotes the Network amongst its Members and in the wider community.
- Administers the PPN in accordance with best practice and to the highest possible standard (to be agreed between the members, and if necessary approved by the Plenary) as outlined in the PPN Guidelines and the Charities Governance Code.
- Manages the work of the Resource Worker and appoints a member to monitor this.
- Is fully involved in the Recruitment process of the PPN Workers.

6.2.3 Secretariat Subgroups

Subgroups of the Secretariat may be established at a Secretariat meeting for a specific project or purpose.

- A minimum of 3 Secretariat members are required to sit on a subgroup, with at least one member of each gender represented.
- The subgroup must submit a written report at each Secretariat meeting.
- The term of a subgroup is from the Secretariat meeting where it is established to the next scheduled Secretariat meeting. The Secretariat may decide to extend the subgroups term

until the next Secretariat meeting. This request must be included in the aforementioned written report.

- The Secretariat will set the terms of reference of the Subgroup at the time of establishment. This will be agreed and included in the minutes. The terms of reference of the subgroup will state the membership, purpose and the decision-making capacity of the subgroup in carrying out its work.
- The Secretariat may decide to invite non-Secretariat members to sit on a subgroup if they feel the addition would be appropriate. Any non-Secretariat members invited to sit on the subgroup must be in addition to the minimum of 3 Secretariat members.
- A short report on the activity of any Secretariat subgroups will be included in the PPN Activity Report published at each Plenary meeting.
- The quorum for a meeting is 2 members of the subgroup.
- The subgroup may meet virtually as well as physically.

6.2.4 Role of the Secretariat Rotating Chair / Facilitator

As Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Secretariat, the Rotating Chair / Facilitator shall:

- Agree the framework with the resource worker for Secretariat meetings (e.g. timeframe, location, facilities etc.).
- Agree the agenda of each Secretariat meeting.
- Manage the progression of agenda items of each Secretariat meeting in terms of the items under discussion, the reaching of decisions and the time allocated.
- Review, agree and ensure the distribution in a timely fashion draft minutes in conjunction with the resource worker.
- Ensure that approved minutes are available.
- Normally act as the primary representative of the PPN network to external bodies or in emergency situations. This role may be delegated in given circumstances.
- Sign off on official PPN correspondence.
- Facilitate the Plenary meeting that takes at the end of their term.

If the Secretariat is dissatisfied with the conduct or performance of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator, the Rotating Chair / Facilitator may be voted out of that role during the course of a scheduled Secretariat meeting, by notification in writing prior to such meeting.

6.3 Linkage Groups

Linkage Groups bring together stakeholder organisations and groups who are members of the PPN with a common interest to discuss their diverse views and interests in a specific policy area. This is a pathway for such organisations and groups to have a real input into policy in their respective area of operation. Linkage Groups are an essential component of the work of the PPN.

Linkage Groups operate under the auspices of the PPN Plenary, and report to the PPN Secretariat. Linkage Groups are independent networks of community groups who are interested in a common theme such as Arts, Community, Environment, Heritage, Housing, Planning, Social Inclusion, Transport or Tourism (and more).

Linkage Groups work to influence change in their thematic area. They do this through advocating

for policy changes on behalf of the community through engaging with LOCAL AUTHORITY and other bodies appropriate to the issue or subject matter of advocacy.

6.3.1 Principal Linkage Groups

There are five (5) principal Linkage Groups operating at a Local Authority area level:

1. Housing, Planning and Transport.
2. Arts, Community, Heritage and Sports.
3. Climate Change, Water and Environment.
4. Social Inclusion, Rural Development, Youth and Enterprise (including Economic Development and Tourism).
5. Community Safety.

The Secretariat may decide to establish new Linkage Groups, subdivide current Linkage Groups or establish issue based Linkage Groups in consultation with the Linkage Groups. Linkage Groups may also be established on an issue basis or as requested. Membership records must note the areas of interest of members.

6.3.2 Membership

- Organisations registered with the PPN are entitled to become a member of any Linkage Groups.
- On completion of the Registration Form, organisations shall specify which Linkage Group their organisation may wish to be a member of.
- Linkage Group membership is open to all members, year-round.
- The Secretariat shall encourage members to participate in Linkage Groups at least once annually.
- PPN Member groups are encouraged to send different representatives to multiple Linkage Groups (i.e. The PPN member does not have to be the same person from the same organisation representing that organisation at all Linkage Groups).

6.3.4 Aim and Role of Linkage Groups

The aim and role of Linkage Groups is to:

- Act as the representative, collective voice of community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in NAME under the relevant thematic area.
- Engage as an equal and independent partner and assert the rights of the sector to organise and structure its own participation in relevant arenas.
- Co-ordinate, enable and support the representation of the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors in NAME on various public and private structures through the nomination of Linkage Group members to relevant decision-making structures as PPN Representatives.
- Support the PPN Representative on the decision-making structure through debating relevant issues, forming policy positions and priorities, giving direction on the position they are to take on issues and discussing feedback on activity.
- Agree and implement a way of communicating with the representative(s) and with each other, which is effective and realistic.
- Provide PPN Members with similar interests the opportunity to meet, network, share

ideas on issues and feed into policies that affect them.

- Use, review and update the PPN Community Issues Paper on an on-going basis, at least annually, providing PPN Members with the opportunity to develop and promote positions on policies relevant to the work of Linkage Groups.
- Develop a work-plan to include specific projects that can be achieved at a local level, and which benefit the local community.
- Apply to the PPN Linkage Group fund for specific action-based projects.
- Facilitate engagement with relevant state agencies such as LOCAL AUTHORITY, {NAME OTHERS}.
- To work collaboratively with other Linkage Groups and representatives in furtherance of the aims of the PPN.
- Facilitate the sharing of information with interested PPN members from decision making structures.
- Work with and report on Linkage Group activity to the Secretariat, Plenary, and to other interested parties when required.
- Facilitate and enable PPN Members to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the Local Government System and not to reduce or homogenise this diversity
- Facilitate member organisation and groups to gain a deeper understanding of the Local Policy Process
- Facilitate any other action or engagement which the Linkage Group considers appropriate to its remit.

6.3.5 Responsibilities of the Linkage Group

Responsibilities of the Linkage Groups members are to:

- To operate in accordance with the principles and values of PPN.
- Make themselves aware of what the Board or Committee they are linked to can and cannot do, having realistic expectations of what a representative can achieve, and understanding confidentiality issues which may arise.
- Be open to new organisations joining the Linkage Group, and to actively seek the input of all groups who have an interest in the area, particularly those who are traditionally socially excluded.
- Communicate and engage clearly and openly with the representative and other Linkage Group members, recognising that there may be differing views expressed on issues, and that the representative must bring the diversity of views to the Board or Committee.
- Take the time to read, absorb and understand communications that are received.
- Feed back to their member groups on the work of the Linkage Group and Board or Committee.
- Inform the wider PPN of key issues and policy positions.
- Keep records of dates, attendance, outputs etc. for meetings (virtual or face to face).
- Minutes of meetings shall be approved at the next meeting and signed and dated by the Rotating Chair / Facilitator.

6.3.6 Rights of the Linkage Group members are to:

- Receive relevant information about the work of the Board or Committee to help them to

participate fully.

- Receive regular communications (at least as frequently as Board or Committee meetings are held) from the representative on matters such as:
 - Dates of Board or Committee meetings.
 - Agendas for Board or Committee meetings.
 - Reports from Board or Committee meetings.
 - Items which require their input.
- Have regular discussions by an agreed mechanism (face to face, Skype conference call, email, social media groups, etc.).
- Have relevant issues pursued in partnership with the Linkage Group Facilitator and Linkage Group Representatives.
- Have Linkage Group discussions facilitated in an open inclusive way, and the views of all members accommodated.

6.3.7 Role of Linkage Group Facilitator

During a meeting of the Linkage Group, the facilitator ensures that:

- The agenda for each meeting is followed.
- Focus is maintained on the relevant agenda item.
- Time boundaries are assigned to each agenda item.
- Business is progressed in an efficient manner.

The wider role of the facilitator of the Linkage Group is to:

- Guide the work of the Linkage Group (including ensuring follow up and progress between meetings).
- Be the point of contact for the PPN for that Linkage Group.
- Plan the work of the Linkage Group to achieve its objectives.
- Be responsible for the functioning of their particular Linkage Group.
- Assist the Linkage Group members to understand their common goal.
- Provide leadership without taking over and remain neutral in all discussions.
- Encourage members of the group to take on tasks and get involved in progressing issues.
- Support elected PPN Representatives who have been elected to represent the PPN on policy committees.

In the event of the facilitator not being in attendance at a Linkage Group meeting, the Rotating Chair / Facilitator shall nominate an alternative prior to the meeting or where alternative is not nominated, the meeting shall appoint a Facilitator either by a show of voting paddles or ballot.

Linkage Group Facilitators are considered PPN Representatives and shall be selected in accordance with the procedures as outlined in section seven (7) of this constitution.

7. PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

All Community and Voluntary Sector Representatives on Decision and Policy Making Bodies of external agencies must come through the PPN Electoral Process.

As per guidelines from the Department of Rural and Community Development, the PPN is the “go to body for all Bodies who wish to benefit from the Community and Voluntary Sector experience

and expertise". The PPN shall actively seek compliance on this with relevant agencies and bodies.

A PPN Representative is any member of the PPN elected to office on behalf of the PPN, including but not limited to: the Secretariat, a Representative to an external Committee, a Linkage Group Facilitator and any other PPN Representative role.

7.1 Principles Governing PPN Representation

- All PPN representatives on Boards or Committees of Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for LOCAL AUTHORITY shall report to and take direction from their respective Linkage Group.
- All contributions and views expressed by PPN Representatives shall be in line with the guidance or mandate from the Linkage Group.
- Representation should be spread widely in terms of gender, geography, and type of organisation.
- A member shall only represent the PPN on one (1) Board or Committee not including the Secretariat.
- A representative is elected for a fixed term of 3 years to represent the issues of PPN members on a Board or Committee.

7.2 Role of the PPN Representative

- Attend and participate fully in meetings of the Linkage Group and Board or Committee, including any subgroups to which they may be appointed.
- Bring forward the issues of the Linkage Group to the Board or Committee for their consideration, including placing items on the Agenda.
- Work openly and collaboratively with the Linkage Group to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc.
- Communicate regularly (at least as frequently as meetings are held) with the Linkage Group on matters such as:
 - Dates of Board or Committee meetings.
 - Agendas for Board or Committee meetings.
 - Reports and Feedback from Board or Committee meetings.
 - Items which require their input or are of interest.

Network and work strategically with other Board or Committee members for the benefit of the Linkage Group and of PPN, including being able to compromise while retaining the core objective.

- Attend and participate fully in the Plenary, Representatives Forum and Representative Training.

7.3 Responsibilities of the PPN Representative

- Assist in the organisation of and preparation of Linkage Group Meetings and effective

two-way communications with Linkage Group members (with the support of the resource worker).

- Be able to use basic electronic communications effectively (i.e. email and internet browsing).
- Prepare thoroughly for, attend and participate actively in Linkage Group and Board or Committee.
- Participate in meetings solely on behalf of PPN, leaving any personal, business or political interests outside.
- Work openly and collaboratively with all Linkage Group members to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc., respecting the diversity of views expressed.
- Put forward opinions and views of Linkage Group to The Board or Committee and feedback clearly using plain English to the Linkage Group.
- Attend relevant training or networking events organised by PPN or the Committee.
- Be open and honest in dealings with all stakeholders.
- Build positive relationships with other committee members for the benefit of the PPN.
- Portray the PPN and the Linkage Group in a positive and constructive way.

7.4 Rights of the PPN Representative

- Have active engagement from the Secretariat, Linkage Group and Plenary, including timely responses to issues.
- Be heard and respected at both the Linkage Group and Board or Committee, with an appreciation that they are a volunteer.
- Be supported by both Linkage Group and Board or Committee members, understanding that PPN is a new and evolving process.
- Have access to an agreed outcome statement from meetings which can be circulated immediately afterwards.
- Receive relevant training to enable them to participate effectively on the Board or Committee.
- Receive expenses for attending Board or Committee meetings including any subgroups and relevant training.
- Have at least some PPN meetings held at a time and location which facilitates them.
- Receive an induction pack for the Board or Committee on taking up appointment to include:
 - Terms of reference.
 - Standing orders and procedures.

- Meeting schedules, locations and times.
- Contact details for all Board or Committee members.
- Access to technical support where required.
- Receive the as much notice as possible of meetings (dates and venues) and associated documentation (agenda, documents and reports to be read) in advance as permitted by the relevant standing orders of the committee or board.
- Have meetings conducted in a way that facilitates participation, open discussion and transparent decision making.

7.5 Vacancies

Representatives are elected to the Joint Policing Committee (JPC), Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), among others – on a three-year basis – in the event of vacancies arising. See Appendix 3 (page 159) for Expectations and Responsibilities of a Board or Committee with PPN Representation.

In the event of a PPN vacancy occurring, an election shall be called by the Secretariat if no panel to fill vacancies exists.

7.5.1 Nominations

There shall be a call for nominations with any eligibility criteria (as determined by the body requesting the representation) for PPN Members to put forward a candidate at least twenty-one (21) days prior to the elections.

The closing date for nomination shall be not less than seven (7) days prior to the date of the election. The nominating group must complete a nomination form which includes a short biography of the candidate.

7.5.2 Election

Should there be an equal number of nominations for the positions available, then a vote shall not be necessary, and the candidates so nominated shall be declared elected.

Should the number of persons nominated exceed the number of vacancies or positions then an election shall take place.

Should an election take place, it shall take place in accordance with the election process in Appendix 4 (page 131).

For PPN vacancies on committees and bodies (excluding the Local Community Development Committee and Secretariat) election shall take place at the Linkage Group for the relevant committee.

For PPN vacancies on committees and bodies which have not had PPN Representation previously, the Secretariat shall determine the most appropriate Linkage Group to nominate that representation responsibility to.

For vacancies occurring on the Local Community Development Committee and the Secretariat elections shall take place at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary.

The Secretariat shall decide (where a panel does not exist) to hold a postal vote or online vote to fill positions arising between Plenaries.

7.5.3 Panel

Where an election takes place, candidates who do not attain a high enough number of votes to attain a seat are transferred to a panel.

Any Vacancy so arising on a board or committee between the normal Annual Electoral Process shall be filled by the next highest candidate willing to serve that particular vacancy.

7.6 Removal of Representatives

If a member feels that a representative on any of the committees or boards fails or otherwise omits to:

- Undertake their role, as laid down by this Constitution, in an appropriate manner.
- Consistently attend the relevant meetings.
- Report back to the Membership or Linkage Group.
- Represent the relevant Linkage Group members appropriately.
- Comply with any written instruction.

or where a Representative represents their own interests or views or lobby on behalf of their own organisation, a formal complaint may be submitted. The complaints procedure is available in Appendix 5. A Linkage Group, or a Linkage Group member, responsible for that representative may submit a formal complaint about that representative as per the Complaints Procedure in Appendix 5.

Separately, if the Secretariat identify through normal monitoring of PPN activity, that a PPN representative may not be fulfilling their role as outlined above, they may choose to refer the matter to the relevant Linkage Group facilitator for discussion at a Linkage Group meeting.

7.7 Code of Conduct for PPN Representatives

Members and Member Representatives of the PPN shall always conduct themselves in a professional manner and in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and the Code of Conduct adopted thereunder. See Appendix 6 for Code of Conduct (page 136).

The Code of Conduct shall be signed by every Member of the PPN elected to a representative position on the various committees and boards where the PPN has such representation and by the members of the Secretariat and by every member who acts as a Facilitator.

7.8.1 Amendments to the Code of Conduct

A proposal to amend the Code of Conduct may be made:

- A. By the Secretariat.
- B. By not less than 30 active members within 10 days of the date the Plenary.

The proposal shall be circulated to the membership and placed on the Agenda for the next Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Plenary convened for that purpose.

The amendment shall be effective forthwith if passed by simple majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary or Extraordinary General Meeting.

8. COMPLAINTS POLICY

The NAME Public Participation Network's complaints policy is available in Appendix 5.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

9.1 Financial Records

Financial Records shall comply with accounting standards and processes and the directions of funders

A copy of the Financial Statement approved by Secretariat shall be circulated to all members prior to AGM.

9.2 PPN Representative Expenses

Expenses of PPN Representatives in the carrying out of their duties are covered as laid out in the PPN Expenses policy. See Appendix 7 (page 139).

10. SERVICE OF NOTICES

A notice may be given to any member either through handing it to the member or by personal delivery or sending it by prepaid registered post or sending it by electronic means to the registered address or email address of that member as per the records of the PPN.

The failure of any member to receive notice of meeting shall not invalidate the proceedings at or of the meeting.

11. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

A proposal to amend the Constitution may be made:

- A. By the Secretariat.
- B. By not less than 30 active members within 10 days of the date the Plenary.

The proposal shall be circulated to the membership and placed on the Agenda for the next Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Plenary convened for that purpose.

The amendment shall be effective forthwith if passed by simple majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.

12. ADOPTION OF CONSTITUTION

This Constitution was adopted at a NAME Public Participation Network Plenary held on

Signed on behalf of NAME Public Participation Network:

Rotating Chair / Facilitator

Date:

Appendix 1: NAME Public Participation Network Plenary Standing Orders

The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure the orderly and effective conduct of Plenary meetings of the NAME Public Participation Network.

1. Frequency of Meetings

The Plenary shall meet twice a year or as requested in accordance with the Constitution.

2. Voting Rights and Decisions

- 2.1 Only matters on the Agenda shall be the business of the meeting in accordance with the constitution.
- 2.2 All decisions taken shall be in accordance with procedures set out in the constitution.
- 2.3 Each named NAME PPN Member Organisation shall have one vote.
- 2.4 Voting shall be by show of voting paddles or secret ballot where requested and in accordance with the constitution.
- 2.5 Decisions shall be by simple majority.
- 2.6 Voting for election to the Secretariat and Local Community Development Committee shall be by secret ballot.
- 2.7 An objection in relation to the qualification of any voter must be raised prior to ballot being taken. Any such objection made in due time shall be referred to Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the meeting whose decision shall be final and conclusive.
- 2.8 A clear record of voting result shall be signed by tellers and countersigned by Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the meeting.
- 2.9 Tellers shall be appointed by the Rotating Chair / Facilitator to count votes. Anyone seeking to be elected to a position shall be disqualified from being appointed a teller.

3. Attendance at Plenaries

- 3.1 All named NAME PPN Organisations are entitled to attend the Plenary.
- 3.2 NAME PPN member organisations can send more than one Representative to the Plenary. Only one of those Representatives shall have voting and speaking rights. Other representatives shall have speaking rights only.
- 3.3 The Secretariat may invite guest speakers to attend the Plenary.
- 3.4 The Secretariat may invite strategic partner organisations to attend the Plenary in an observer capacity.

4. Agenda

- 4.1 The Agenda shall be prepared by the Secretariat. The order of business shall be:
 1. Welcome address by Rotating Chair / Facilitator
 2. Housekeeping Duties, Health and Safety
 3. Adopting Plenary Standing Orders
 4. Approval of Minutes of last Plenary and Matters Arising
 5. PPN Activity Report by Secretariat Member
 6. Finance and Budget Update

7. Ratification of Linkage Group Elections.
 8. Election to fill any Vacancies arising on the Secretariat and Local Community Development Committee (Annual General Meeting only).
 9. Items and Motions submitted for Discussion and Decision.
 10. Workshop / Information Session / Guest Speaker as requested by previous Plenary and / or as organised by the Secretariat.
 11. Date of Next Meeting
- 4.2 Items that member organisations want included on the Agenda shall be presented to the Secretariat at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting. Similar items shall be taken as a composite item or motion as directed by Secretariat.
- 4.3 The Plenary meeting shall be facilitated by a member of the Secretariat or as set out in the constitution.
5. Minutes of the Plenary
- 5.1 The minutes of the Plenary shall be taken by a member of the Secretariat or NAME PPN Staff.
- 5.2 The minutes shall include a record of those attending, actions arising, and decisions made.
6. Conduct at Plenary Meetings
- 6.1 Members always shall observe accepted practice while taking part in the Plenary business, including:
- Be courteous and speak by addressing the Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
 - Only address the meeting in order and as directed by Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
 - Always Comply immediately with directions of Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
 - No cross talk or interruption of any speaker addressing the meeting;
 - Follow the agenda and strive to reach effective decisions;
 - Represent the views of your member organisation;
 - Turn off your mobile phones as you enter the room of debate (where you have an emergency call please leave the room);
 - Be prepared for the Plenary by reading relevant documents etc. received before the meeting;
 - Business shall be conducted by the Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Plenary in keeping with Standing Orders.
- 6.2 Discrimination

All members attending the Plenary have the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, gender, age, sexuality, religion or any other matter which causes people to be treated with injustice.

7. Process of Motions and Resolutions

Any motion proposed and seconded at the meeting becomes a resolution and shall take precedence in the discussion and shall be immediately placed before the meeting for discussion and resolution.

The Rotating Chair / Facilitator shall put the resolution to a vote when of the view that such is the

appropriate procedure at that point and such decision taken by Rotating Chair / Facilitator shall be final and the resolution shall then be placed before the meeting for decision by simple majority – a ballot or show of voting paddles.

Where a member proposes that the “Resolution be now put before the meeting” and such a proposal is seconded then that resolution takes precedence at that point of the meeting and such resolution placed before the meeting for decision by simple majority – a ballot or show of voting paddles.

Should the resolution be carried by simple majority either by show of voting paddles or ballot then the original resolution or as amended by the meeting shall be placed before the meeting for decision by simple majority without any further debate – a ballot or show of voting paddles.

Should a secret ballot (poll) be called for by three (3) or more members then a ballot shall precede with tellers being appointed with the process being overseen by the Secretariat, or where the Secretariat is not available, through the election of a Standing Orders Committee for that meeting only.

In the event of equality of votes the Rotating Chair / Facilitator shall have a second or casting vote (should that person choose to use such a vote).

Where a resolution is not carried due to an equality of votes or is lost, the same resolution shall not be placed before the membership for a period of six (6) months.

A demand for a secret ballot may be withdrawn by the person or persons who made the demand.

8. Adjournment of Meeting

Where a proposal is made by a member to adjourn the meeting and such proposal is seconded then that proposal shall be taken forthwith without further debate and placed before the meeting for resolution by simple majority.

Where such a proposal is carried, the meeting shall by simple majority decide when (date, time and place) the meeting as adjourned is reconvened.

9. Suspension of Standing Orders

Standing orders as regards any meeting may be suspended by simple majority of members present to address urgent item of business.

Appendix 2: Gathering Signatures

PPN Members who wish to gather signatures of other PPN members can do so through:

- Attendance at PPN Activities such as Linkage Groups, Training, and other open meeting types.
- Making use of the online directory of PPN members, available at www.AREAppn.ie/members.
- Submitting a news item for the PPN Newsletter with relevant contact information.
- Using the contact emails for all PPN Representatives, Rotating Chair / Facilitators and Linkage Groups on the PPN website.
- Cooperating with other PPN members in their local area.
- Templates for gathering signatures are available on the PPN website, available at: WEBSITE.

Appendix 3: Expectations and Responsibilities of a Board and Committee with PPN Representation

The way in which the Committee conducts its business has a huge impact on the effectiveness of PPN representation. An overformal and rigid process can make participation difficult. An open facilitative style can make it easy for all members to participate and contribute. The following expectations and responsibilities are generally within the remit of the Chair or Chief Officer (or equivalent). The majority are likely to be already in place.

Where a board or committee has PPN representation, the PPN expects it to:

- Have and communicate clear terms of reference, procedures, standing orders and a vision for the Board or Committee.
- Hold regular meetings at times, dates and locations that facilitate the participation of volunteers. Ideally these dates should be set annually.
- Hold an induction meeting and have an induction pack for new members to explain the processes and procedures of the Board or Committee.
- Give one month's notice of meetings and to circulate the agenda and any documentation for reading a minimum one week in advance. This is to facilitate PPN members to consult with their linkage group before the meeting and to ensure that members have adequate information with which to make comments and decisions.
- Chair the meeting in an open and transparent way as to enable and value the contribution of all members and fosters a culture of active listening. This should include giving enough time for discussion and deliberation of items, and if required setting up subgroups to bring recommendations to the main Board or Committee. Decisions should be made in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are clearly stated and dealt with appropriately.
- Offer relevant training to all members and to provide support to members in interpreting technical documents.
- Review the workings of the Board or Committee on a regular basis and to take on board any recommendations.
- Set the agenda in consultation with members and to enable members to put items on the agenda.
- Pay travel and other expenses to members (where possible).
- Include all points of discussion within the minutes, and not to dismiss those which may be considered "only relevant to a few".
- To produce an agreed "meeting outcome" document at the end of each meeting that can be shared with the Linkage Group.
- What a board or committee can expect from a PPN Representative:
 - Attend meetings, or send their alternate (where possible);
 - Prepare thoroughly for meetings, and be able to contribute fully;
 - Feedback to their PPN Linkage Group and take direction from them;
 - Take a full part in the workings of the Board or Committee including participation in subgroups, consultations, etc.;
 - Be open and honest in their dealings with the Board or Committee, declaring any potential conflicts of interest.

Appendix 4: Electoral Process

The process of Election is Proportional Representation Single Transferable Vote (PRSTV).

- All Elections shall be by secret ballot.
- Each member group or organisation shall be entitling to one (1) vote and an individual shall only vote on behalf of the group.
- The Candidates receiving the highest number of votes are elected.
- In the event of a “tie” then a draw by “lot” (Note: Where the process by deciding by “lot” (Lottery) occurs, those responsible must first decide which Candidate shall be declared elected following such process. Is it the Candidate first drawn out of the “hat” (traditional expression) or the Candidate remaining in the “hat”?).
- Records of each Election must be maintained including details of each Count.
- Verification of Nominees to ensure they meet the criteria.
- Circulation of details of Nominees to Linkage Groups to consider them prior to the Election.

Appendix 5: Complaints Policy

NAME Public Participation Network is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you may have about our service.

If we got something wrong, we will apologise and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

When to use this policy

When you complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us (for example services provided by LOCAL AUTHORITY, NAME OTHERS etc.) and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things as soon as possible and in the easiest and most direct way. If you have a complaint, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. However, they may need time, up to 5 work days, to look into it.

If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your complaint, the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for your complaint to be formally investigated.

How to complain formally

You can make a complaint in any of the ways below:

- You can ask for a copy of our complaint form from the person with whom you are already in contact.
- You can use the form on our website at WEBSITE .
- You can e mail us at EMAIL ADDRESS.
- You can write a letter to us at the following address: Complaints, NAME Public Participation Network, ADDRESS.

Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available on our website www.AREAppn.ie.

Physical copies of this policy and the complaint form are available upon request from EMAIL.

What should you include in your complaint?

- Remember to state your name, address and telephone number (and email, if applicable) and whether you are acting on behalf of someone else
- Briefly describe what your complaint is about stating relevant dates and times, if applicable
- List your specific concerns starting with the most important concern
- Be clear about what you are hoping to achieve (for example an apology, explanation, etc.)
- State your preferred method of communication

It will assist the Complaints Officer if extra information and/or copies of relevant documents are attached to your complaint.

Dealing with your complaint

We will formally acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.

We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements for example, if you have language difficulties.

We will deal with your complaint in an open and honest way.

We will make sure that your interactions with us in the future do not suffer just because you have made a complaint.

If you are making a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your complaint. If your complaint is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the service to look into it and get back to you. In some cases, if the complaint is serious, we may ask someone from outside the organisation to investigate.

We will set out to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days of the Secretariat meeting that directly follows the receipt of the complaint.

If your complaint is more complex we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- give you regular updates every 20 working days on any progress made

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are.

In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

When investigating your complaint, we will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint.

If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or email, for example.

If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Putting things right

If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

Appeal

If we formally investigate your complaint and you are not satisfied with the outcome you may request an optional local appeal which will be dealt with by persons not involved in the original handling of your complaint.

Department of Rural and Community Development

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The DRCD is the Government Department responsible for the oversight of Public Participation Networks and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on our part.

The DRCD expects you to bring your complaint to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the DRCD by:

- telephone: 076 106 4900
- email: ppn@drcd.gov.ie
- writing to: Department of Rural and Community Development, Trinity Point, 10–11 South Leinster Street, Dublin 2, D02 EF85

Learning Lessons

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. The Secretariat considers a summary of all complaints on a regular basis as well as details of any serious complaints.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

What if you need help

Our staff will aim to help you make your complaint known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact your local Citizens Information Centre who may be able to assist you.

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

Everyone involved in a process under this policy are expected to respect the confidentiality of the matter and of everyone involved throughout the process.

Appendix 6: Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct shall be signed by every member of the PPN elected to a representative position on the various committees or boards where the PPN has such representation and by the members of the Secretariat and by every member who acts as a Rotating Chair / Facilitator.

This Code of Conduct details what each member shall commit to in their role as a representative of the PPN and in all areas relating to their interaction with, and on behalf of, the PPN.

All members and members with a representative role have a duty of care and responsibility to act in the best interests of the PPN complying with this Code of Conduct and the provisions of the Constitution.

1. Organisational Values

All Members commit to and promise to comply with the fundamental values that underpin all the activities of PPN.

2. Accountability

As a member everything you do and every interaction you are involved in shall be able to stand the test of scrutiny by members of the public, the media, members, beneficiaries, stakeholders and the regulatory authorities.

3. Integrity and Honesty

These shall be the hallmarks of all conduct within and on behalf of the PPN particularly when dealing with fellow members and colleagues and external individuals and agencies.

4. Transparency

Members shall promote an atmosphere of openness throughout the PPN in order to promote confidence to members of the public, LOCAL AUTHORITY Elected Members and staff, beneficiaries and regulators and to promote strategic and operational effectiveness.

5. Governance

Members shall always support the ethos and values of PPN and ensure compliance with good governance and shall:

- Commit to supporting and advocating compliance with good governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector and the myriad of groups and organisations within the sector;
- Participate in appropriate induction, training and development programmes;
- Support the Resource Worker in their executive role and the Rotating Chair / Facilitator in their leadership role.

6. Conflicts of Interest

Members shall always:

- Act in the best interests of the PPN;
- Declare any potential 'Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Loyalty' or any such circumstance as may be viewed by others as conflicting as soon as it arises;
- Abide by decisions of the Secretariat and comply with any requirements it requires regarding potential conflicts of interest or loyalty.

7. Guardian of the PPN's reputation

Members shall:

- Not speak as a member to the media or any public forum without the prior knowledge and approval of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Secretariat.
- Ensure that any comments made shall reflect current policy even if they do not agree with them.
- When speaking as a private citizen upholds the reputation of the PPN.
- Respect individual confidentiality.
- Take an active interest in the PPN's public image.

8. Personal Gain

Members shall:

- Not personally gain from their role as a member nor permit others to do so as a result of actions or negligence.
- Document expenses and seek reimbursement according to agreed procedure.
- Not accept gifts or hospitality without the consent of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator.
- Use PPN resources responsibly, when authorised in accordance with procedure.

9. In addition to the foregoing Members shall:

- Support the PPN's vision, values, principles and aims and actively promote these;
- Always comply with PPN's policy and procedure;
- Seek to maintain and promote integrity, good governance, effectiveness and efficiency for the delivery of the aims of PPN;
- Not break the law or act against any regulation in force that would bring the PPN into disrepute;

10. Plenary and other Meetings of PPN Members

Members attending Plenary and other meetings internal to or external to the PPN shall at all times conduct and behave in a professional manner keeping in mind at all times their conduct reflects on the integrity of the PPN and the sector and shall observe accepted practice while participating as a representative or member and shall:

- Be courteous and speak by addressing the Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
- Only address the meeting in order and as directed by Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
- Comply immediately with directions of Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
- Not cross talk or interruption of any speaker addressing the meeting;
- Follow the Agenda and strive to reach effective decisions;
- Represent the views of your member organisation;
- Turn off your mobile phones (where you have an emergency call please leave the room);
- Be prepared for all meetings by reading relevant documents that are received in reasonable time before the meeting.

11. Secretariat

Members of the Secretariat shall:

- Embody the principles of good governance and proper procedure in all actions and live up to the trust placed on them by their election to the Secretariat.

- Comply and abide by the PPN governance procedures and practice.
- Commit to attend all Secretariat Meetings, and in the event of unavoidable inability to attend, shall comply with provisions of the Constitution.
- Strive to be familiar with all agenda items received by them and be prepared to contribute to discussion and decision making at meetings.
- Respect the authority of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator.
- Maintain a respectful attitude to the opinions of others.
- Understand that decisions will ideally be made by consensus but may be by vote and shall consider any majority vote as a corporate decision and will accept and support it.
- Maintain confidentiality unless authorised to speak on matters outside Secretariat meetings.

12. Leaving the Secretariat or Representative Role

Members shall:

- Understand that any breach of this code may result in that person's removal from the PPN or any of its constituent levels – Linkage Groups, Secretariat or any representative role.
- Inform the Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Secretariat in writing, stating reasons for resigning from the Secretariat or representative role.
- Participate in an exit interview if requested.

13. This Code of Conduct was adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the PPN held on:

_____.

14. Signed on behalf of NAME Public Participation Network:

Date: _____

Rotating Chair / Facilitator

15. Signed by Representative / Secretariat Member / Rotating Chair / Facilitator:

Date: _____

16. Name of Committee / Board: _____

Appendix 7: NAME PPN Travel and Subsistence Policy

NAME PPN Travel & Subsistence Policy

In general, any reasonable expenses arising for a NAME Public Participation Network Representative on a Decision-Making Committee (SPCs, LCDC JPC and the Secretariat) shall be met by NAME PPN.

The following key principles underpin this policy:

- NAME PPN Representatives on Decision Making Committees should be properly compensated for out of pocket expenses when contributing to any activities associated with that committee.
- The process of claiming for the reimbursement of expenses should be as straightforward as possible while following procedures that allow the NAME PPN to properly account for payments made
- The NAME PPN shall provide support to representatives who require help in submitting claims for the reimbursement of expenses
- Reimbursing Representatives for expenses whilst contributing their expertise and time to meetings, committees, training or other activities organised by the NAME PPN is best practice.
- Payment shall only be approved for meetings for which a report has been received by a PPN representative. In cases where there are multiple PPN representatives on one committee or at one event, one report on behalf of all shall suffice.

Expenses for Travelling to and from meetings:

- The rates for Travel and Expenses payable to those travelling on PPN business are as per public sector norms.
- Claims to be made within three months of being accrued.
- All claims shall be reimbursed by electronic transfer – all Representatives in receipt of expenses are required to provide bank account details.
- Claims to be made on the official Travel and Subsistence Claims Form (attached).

Subsistence:

- NAME PPN Representatives can claim back the cost of food or drink that was bought on the day of the meeting, training etc., but only:
 - When the total time involved has been five hours or more; or
 - If no food or drink was provided at the meeting, training etc.
- Subsistence claims shall be paid on production of appropriate receipts and should be claimed on the Travel and Subsistence Claim Form.

Other Costs:

All other costs to the NAME PPN Representative shall be dealt with as they arise and according to available budgets.

(iii) Where PPN is hosted by a special purpose support company established for this purpose (incorporated as a CLG)

Companies Act 2014

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL

**Constitution of the
{NAME} Public Participation Network Company Limited by Guarantee
Memorandum of Association**

Definitions

In this Memorandum the following words shall have the following meanings:

“Public Participation Network” or “PPN” shall refer to the network of community and voluntary organisations in {NAME} established in accordance with the Local Government Reform Act 2014

“Community development” shall refer to activities for the economic, social, cultural and educational improvement of communities whether geographic communities or communities of interest, through the use of participatory and inclusive methods of working

“appropriate means” shall refer to any legal activity which does not duplicate, interfere with, detract from or compromise any function of the PPN or any activities of the PPN directed towards the implementation of those functions. In the event of a dispute arising between the PPN and the Company as to whether any activity of the Company so compromises any function or activity of the PPN the Company shall immediately abide by the decision of the PPN and cease any activities as requested by the PPN. This definition shall not be interpreted as preventing the Company from acting as the agent of the PPN for any purpose if so requested by the PPN.

1. The name of the Company (hereinafter called the Company) is the {NAME} Public Participation Network Company Limited by Guarantee
2. The Company is a company limited by guarantee registered under Part 18 of the Companies Act 2014
3. The main objects for which the Company is established are the following –
 - (a) To provide support to the Public Participation Network (PPN) to the extent that such support is requested by the Network
 - (b) Generally to support through appropriate means, voluntary and community activity in the Local Authority area / area of {NAME} through a community development approach and having particular regard to the economic, social, cultural and educational needs of the population.
4. The liability of the members is limited
5. Every member of the company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company, if the company is wound up while he or she is a member or is wound up within one year after the date on which he or she ceases to be a member, for –
 - (a) the payment of the debts and liabilities of the company contracted before he or she ceases

to be a member, and the costs, charges and expenses of winding up; and
(b) the adjustment of the rights of contributories among themselves,

such amount as may be required, not exceeding €1.

6. The Company shall in addition to the powers conferred on it by law have the following powers which are exclusively subsidiary and ancillary to the Main Object and which powers may only be exercised in promoting the Main Object. Any income generated by the exercise of these powers is to be applied to the promotion of the Main Object:
 - a) To employ on such terms and conditions as it sees fit such staff and other resources as may be necessary to achieve the objects of the Company and for its proper management and operation
 - b) To acquire by rental, lease, purchase, donation or otherwise, such property and effects as shall be necessary or expedient to attain those ends.
 - c) To acquire in any manner (including acquisition by purchase out of the funds of the Company) and hold any investments (being at the time of acquisition of a nature authorised by law for the investment of trust funds, or of a nature authorised by the trust of the fund out of which the same shall be acquired, or by the Donor of the same) and to apply the income thereof (subject to any trusts imposed by the Donor of, affecting the same) at the discretion of the Board for the preservation and maintenance of the property of the Company or any parts thereof, or for any of the objects of the Company.
 - d) To accept, seek and collect grants, subscriptions and donations by any means whatsoever (whether of real or personal estate) and devises and bequests for all or any of the objects aforesaid, and to sell or dispose of or (as far as permitted by law) to lease and accept surrenders or lease of and manage all real estate (including leaseholds) so received and not required to be, or capable of being occupied for the objects of the Company and generally to manage, invest and expend all moneys and property belonging to the Company.
 - e) To accumulate capital for any purposes of the Company and to appropriate any of the Company's assets to specific purposes, either conditionally or unconditionally. In the event of the Company having an intention to accumulate funds for a period in excess of two (2) years, the prior permission of the Revenue Commissioners to such accumulation shall first be obtained.
 - f) To borrow or raise or secure the payment of money on the security of its assets in such manner as the Company shall think fit.
 - g) To act in concert or make any arrangements with any Department of State, Corporation, County Company, conservancy Fishery or other Local Authority, Public or Private Body, now or hereafter constituted, or with individual with reference to any of the objects aforesaid and to accept payment of money from such bodies in furtherance of the objects of the Company and apply the same to such objects.
 - h) To act as Trustees of any property, real or personal, for any of the above objects of the Company.
 - i) To provide, build, endow, furnish and fit out with all necessary furniture, instruments and other equipment and to maintain and manage buildings and other structures in furtherance of the objects of the Company.

- j) To establish and support, and to aid in the establishment and support of any other association formed for all, or any of the objects of this Company which shall prohibit the distribution of its or their income and property among its or their members to an extent at least as great as is imposed on the Company under or by virtue of Clause 8 hereof.
- k) To adopt all such means including the granting of prizes, awards and donations and the promotion and provision of conferences, public and private meetings, discussions, publication and dissemination of books, writings, pamphlets, correspondence and the organisation and holding of exhibitions and productions, and the employment of all other types of visual and oral communication or publicising, making known, promoting and furthering the objects and proceedings of the Company, or any of them, as may seem expedient.
- l) To enter into a partnership or into any arrangement for sharing profits, union of interest, co-operation, joint venture, reciprocal concession or otherwise with any person, Company, society, trust or other partnership, carrying on or engaged in or about to carry on or engage in, any business or transaction capable of being conducted so as directly or indirectly to benefit the Company and which prohibits the distribution of its income and assets to at least as great a degree as the Company by virtue of Clause 8 hereof and to lend money or to guarantee the contracts of, or otherwise assist any such person, Company, society, trust or other partnership and to take over or otherwise acquire shares, stock, debentures or debenture stock and securities of any such person, Company, society, trust or other partnership and to sell, hold, re-issue with or without guarantee or otherwise deal with same.
- m) To do all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the preservation and maintenance of the property of the Company or the attainment of the objects hereinbefore described, provided that in case the Company shall take or hold any property subject to the jurisdiction of the Revenue Commissioners, the Company shall, if required by the Commissioners, vest the same in special trustees thereof and provided that as regards any such property the Company shall not sell, mortgage, charge, lease, dispose of or otherwise deal with the same without such consent as may be required by law and or from the Commissioners; provided that the Company shall not support with its funds any object or regulation which if an object of the Company would make it a Trade Union.

WINDING UP

7. If upon the winding up or dissolution of the Company there remains, after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid to or distributed among the members of the Company but shall be given or transferred to some other charitable institution or institutions having main objects similar to the main object(s) of the Company and which shall prohibit the distribution of its or their income and property among its or their members to an extent at least as great as is imposed on the Company, under or by virtue of Clause 8 hereof, such institution or institutions to be determined by the members of the Company at or before the time of dissolution, and if so far as effect cannot be given to such provision, then the property shall be given or transferred to some charitable object with the agreement of the Charities Regulator. Final accounts shall be prepared and submitted that will include a section that identifies and values any assets transferred along with the details of the recipients and the terms of transfer.

INCOME AND PROPERTY

8. The income and property of the Company, wherever derived, shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the main object(s) of the Company as set forth in this Constitution. No portion of the Company's income and property shall be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit to members of the Company.

No Director shall be appointed to any office of the Company paid by salary or fees, or receive any remuneration or other benefit in money or money's worth from the Company. However, nothing shall prevent any payment in good faith by the Company of:

- a) reasonable and proper remuneration to any member, officer or servant of the Company (not being a Director) for any services rendered to the Company
- b) interest at a rate not exceeding 1% above the Euro Interbank Offered Rate (Euribor) per annum on money lent by the Directors or other members of the Company to the Company
- c) reasonable and proper rent for premises demised and let by any member of the Company (including any Director) to the Company
- d) reasonable and proper out of pocket expenses incurred by any Director in connection with attendance to any matter affecting the Company
- e) fees, remuneration or other benefit in money's worth to any Company of which a Director may be a member holding not more than one hundredth part of the issued capital of such Company
- f) Nothing shall prevent any payment by the Company to a person pursuant to an agreement entered into in compliance with section 89 of the Charities Act, 2009 (as for the time being amended, extended or replaced).

ADDITIONS, ALTERATIONS OR AMENDMENTS

9. No addition, alteration or amendment shall be made to or in the provisions of this Memorandum of Association for the time being in force unless the same shall have been proposed as a Special Resolution at a General Meeting of the Company and adopted with not less than three-quarters of the members present voting in favour.
10. The Company shall ensure that the Charities Regulator has a copy of its most recent Constitution. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the Constitution of the Company which requires the prior approval of the Charities Regulator, advance notice in writing of the proposed changes shall be given to the Charities Regulator for approval, and the amendment shall not take effect until such approval is received.

KEEPING ACCOUNTS

11. Annual audited accounts shall be kept and made available to the Revenue Commissioners and the Charities Regulator on request.

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

The following regulations shall apply to the Company

DEFINITIONS

In these Articles the following words shall have the following meanings:

“the Act” – means the Companies Act 2014 or any statutory modification or amendment or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force.

“Board” means the Directors for the time being of the Company which body shall exercise all such powers and discharge all such duties of the Board of the Company.

“the Seal” means the Common Seal of the Company.

“Month” - means calendar month

“Member of the Company” shall be as defined in Article 1 below

“The Secretariat” shall be defined as the Secretariat of the {NAME} Public Participation Network

“Secretary” means any person appointed to perform the duties of the Secretary of the Company

“Special resolution” is as defined in Section 191 (2) and (3) of the Act

Words importing the singular shall include the plural and words importing the masculine shall include the feminine and vice versa

Where reference is made in these Articles to a fraction of the membership of the Company or the Board and where such fraction does not constitute a whole number, the fraction shall be deemed to refer to the next highest whole number

A Member of the Company shall be deemed to be present at a meeting whether they are present in person or through the use of a proxy

Expressions referring to writing shall, unless the contrary intention appears, be construed as including reference to printing, lithography, photography and any other modes of representing or reproducing words in physical form.

MEMBERSHIP

1. For the purposes of registration the number of members of the Company is taken to be 15 but the Company may from time to time register an increase in numbers. The Members shall be as defined at Article 2 below
2. Those members of the Board of Directors specified at Article 8 below shall be automatically deemed to be Members of the Company and membership shall be restricted to those persons.
3. A Member of the Company shall automatically cease to be a Member as soon as his position as a Member of the Board of Directors in accordance with Article 8 below ceases.
4. Every Member shall use his best endeavours to promote the objects and interests of the Company and shall observe all the Company's regulations affecting his membership contained in or effective pursuant to these presents.

5. The rights of every Member shall be personal to himself and shall not be transferable, transmissible or chargeable by his own act, by operation of law or otherwise.
6. Any Member who for any cause whatsoever shall cease to be a Member shall remain liable for and shall pay to the Company all moneys which may become payable by him by virtue of his liability under this Articles of Association.
7. A Register shall be kept by the Company containing the names and addresses of all the Members, together with such other particulars as may be required by the Act.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

8. The affairs of the Company shall be managed by a Board of Directors and the number of Directors shall be not less than 8 or more than 18. The first Directors shall be the persons named in the statement delivered to the Registrar of Companies pursuant to Section 22 of the Act. The Board of Directors shall be constituted as follows –
 - a. Not less than eight nominees of the PPN Secretariat. Such nominees may or may not be members of the Secretariat but shall be members of an organisation affiliated to the {NAME} PPN.
 - b. Up to three members co-opted in accordance with Article 9 below
 - c. The term of office of members nominated in accordance with Article 8(a) above shall be three years save that the term of office of the first nominees shall be three years from the date of the first AGM of the company.
 - d. With the exception of the first nominated members, the term of office referred to at 8(c) above shall commence at the completion of the AGM following the date on which the said members are nominated and shall cease at the completion of the third AGM following the AGM at which their term of office commences.
 - e. The Secretary of the Company shall contact the PPN Secretariat not less than three months prior to the date of any AGM at which Members of the Board are to be nominated in accordance with Article 8(a) above and shall request that any process required to identify the said nominees is commenced and the outcome notified to the Company not less than 10 days prior to the AGM.
 - f. In the event of a Director nominated in accordance with this Article retiring or being removed from office, the Secretary of the Company shall, within seven days, request the Secretariat in writing to nominate a replacement Director. The term of office of any such Director shall be the unexpired part of the term of office of the Director they are replacing.
9. (a) The Board shall have the power to co-opt up to three Directors in accordance with Article 8 (b) above. In considering whether to co-opt such members and who to co-opt, the Board shall have regard to the following –
 - i Any part of the Local Authority area / area, or any part of the community and voluntary sector not represented on the Board
 - ii Any specific skills required by the Board at the time of co-option
 - iii The need to promote gender balance and social inclusion(b) Subject to Article 2 above, a Director co-opted under this Article shall have the same powers and responsibilities as any other Board member but shall remain in office only until

the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting following their co-option at which point they shall retire.

(c) Directors co-opted in accordance with Article 9(a) above shall be eligible for continuing co-option by successive Boards without limit as to the number of times they are so co-opted. In considering whether to co-opt a Director for a second or subsequent year the Board shall have particular regard to paragraph (b) of this Article and a record shall be made in the minutes of the meeting at which such co-option is made, of the considerations that influenced the decision to make such co-option.

10. No remuneration shall be payable under any circumstances to any of the Directors in respect of his services as Director or on any Committee of Directors to which the Directors may delegate power under Article 18. The Directors may be paid all travelling, hotel and other expenses properly incurred by them in attending and returning from meetings of the Directors or any committee of the Directors or general meetings of the Company or otherwise in connection with the business of the Company.
11. The business of the Company shall be managed by the Directors, who may pay all expenses incurred in promoting and registering the Company and may exercise all such powers as are not, by the Act or by these Articles required to be exercised by the Company in General Meeting, subject nevertheless to the provisions of the Act and to such directions, not being inconsistent with the aforesaid provisions as the Company in General Meeting may (by special resolution) give. No such direction given by the Company in general Meeting shall invalidate any prior act of the Directors which would have been valid if that direction had not been given.

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

12. (a) At the first meeting of the Board following each Annual General Meeting, the Board shall by nomination and secret ballot if required elect officers from amongst its elected members namely – Chairperson and such other officers as may be deemed necessary by the Board.

(b) In the event of no elected or nominated member of the Board being willing to act as Chairperson, the Board may co-opt a person to fill position. Any such person so co-opted shall be deemed to be a member of the Board and of the company.
13. In the event of no member of Board being willing or qualified to act as Secretary the Board may appoint a person or organisation to act in that capacity for such term and at such remuneration and upon such conditions as they think fit; and any Secretary so appointed may be removed by them.
14. A provision of the Act or these Articles requiring or authorising a thing to be done by or to a Director and the Secretary shall not be satisfied by its being done by or to the same person acting both as Director and as, or in place of, the Secretary.
15. The term of office of the Chairperson shall be one year.

CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

16. The Chairperson of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and shall have the power on behalf of the Company to perform all acts and execute all documents

to make effective decisions of the Board of Directors save the execution of financial instruments. The Chairperson shall be the primary representative of the Board and shall see that orders and resolutions of the Board are carried into effect.

TERMINATION OF OFFICE

17. The office of Director shall be vacated if a Director ceases to be qualified for the position of Charity Trustee under Section 55 of the Charities Act 2009 or in the event of their submitting a letter to the Secretary indicating their wish to retire from the Board.

COMMITTEES

18. Without prejudice to Section 40 of the Act, the Directors may, from time to time, appoint such Committees as it may consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of the Company and such Committees shall conduct their business in accordance with terms of reference, rules and procedures that shall be determined by the Board prior to the first meeting of the Committee. The Board shall also appoint a Convener of each such Committee who shall submit a written progress report on the work of the said Committee to each meeting of the Board unless otherwise directed by the Board.
19. Committees may co-opt members of the community considered suitable for the particular task being undertaken by the sub-committee subject to ratification by the Board.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD

20. The Board may meet together for the dispatch of business, adjourn and otherwise regulate their members as they think fit.
21. The Board shall seek to achieve consensus regarding questions arising at any meeting and it shall be the duty of the Chairperson and all members to work to that end. In the event that consensus is not achieved that matter, unless it is declared by the Chairperson to be a matter of urgency, shall stand adjourned to the next meeting of the Board.
In the period between the Board meetings the Chairperson shall seek a consensus on the matter. At the Board meeting following that at which the question was adjourned, the question shall be decided by a majority of votes and in case of equality of votes, the Chairperson shall have a further or casting vote.
22. The Board shall meet as often as it considers necessary but not less than four times per year
23. No business shall be transacted at any Board Meeting unless a quorum is present when the meeting begins. Six or one third of the number of members of the Board whichever is the greater shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of any meetings of the Board properly convened.
24. If, within half an hour from the time appointed for a meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting shall stand adjourned to the same day in the next week at the same time and place or such other place as the Chairperson may appoint and if at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting, the members present shall be a quorum.
25. Two Board members may request a meeting of the Board, and the Secretary, on the requisition of two such members, shall summon such meeting.

26. The continuing Board may act notwithstanding any vacancy in their body, but if and so long as their number is below the number fixed by these Articles of Association as the necessary quorum of the members of the Board, the continuing members of the Board may act for the purpose of summoning a General Meeting of the Company but for no other purpose.
27. All acts done by any meeting of the Board or by any person acting as a member of the Board or any Sub-Committee shall, notwithstanding that it be afterwards discovered that there was some defect in the appointment of any such person acting as aforesaid, or that he or she or any of the Board was disqualified, be as valid as if every such person had been duly appointed.
28. The Board shall cause Minutes to be made in books provided for the purpose:
 - a) of all appointments of members of the Board and of officers of the Company made by the Directors.
 - b) of the names of the Board members present at each meeting of the Board or any Committee.
 - c) of all resolutions and proceedings at all meetings of the Company and of the Board and Committees.
29. The Board may, from time to time adopt such rules and procedures as it considers desirable for the management and well-being of any of its subsidiary activities.
30. A resolution in writing, signed by all the Directors for the time being entitled to receive a notice of a meeting of the Directors shall be as valid as if it had been passed at a meeting of the Directors duly convened and held. Any such resolutions in writing may consist of several documents in the like form each signed by one or more of the Directors and for all purposes shall take effect from the time when it was signed by the last Director.
31. A meeting of the Directors or of a Committee established by the Directors may consist of a conference between some or all of the Directors or, as the case may be, members of the Committee who are not all in one place but each of whom is able (directly or by means of telephonic, video or other electronic communication) to speak to each of the others and to be heard by each of the others and
 - a. A Director or member of a Committee taking part in such a conference shall be deemed to be present in person at the meeting and shall be entitled to vote and be counted in a quorum accordingly; and
 - b. Such a meeting shall be deemed to take place –
 - i where the largest group of those participating in the conference is assembled;
 - ii if there is no such group, where the Chairperson of the meeting then is;
 - iii if neither sub-paragraph (i) or (ii) applies, in such location as the meeting itself decides.

GENERAL MEETINGS

32. A General Meeting of the members of the Company shall be held once in every calendar year within a period of nine months of the Company's financial year's end at such date, at such place within the State and at such time as the Board may decide.
33. The above mentioned General Meeting shall be called an Annual General Meeting and all other General Meetings shall be called Extraordinary General Meetings.

34. The Board may, whenever they think fit, convene an Extraordinary General Meeting. An Extraordinary General Meeting shall also be convened if requested in writing by not less than one quarter of the members of the Company.
35. If at any time there are not within the State sufficient members of the Board capable of acting to form a quorum, any member of the Board may convene an Extraordinary General Meeting in the same manner as nearly possible as that in which meetings may be convened by the Board of the Company.

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

36. A meeting of the Company other than an adjourned meeting shall be called
 - i) In the case of the Annual general Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting for the passing of a special resolution 21 days' notice
 - ii) In the case of any other Extraordinary General Meeting, by not less than 7 days' notice
37. A meeting of the Company shall, notwithstanding that it is called by shorter notice than that specified in Article 36, be deemed to have been duly called if it is so agreed by all the members entitled to attend and vote at the meeting and unless no statutory auditors of the Company stand appointed in consequence of the Company availing itself of the audit exemption, the statutory auditors of the Company
38. Where notice of a meeting is given by posting it by ordinary prepaid post to the registered address of a member then, for the purposes of any issue as to whether the correct period of notice for that meeting has been given, the giving of the notice shall be deemed to have been effected on the expiration of 24 hours following posting.
39. In determining whether the correct period of notice has been given by a notice of a meeting, neither the day on which the notice is served nor the day of the meeting for which it is given shall be counted.
40. The notice of a meeting shall specify:
 - a. The place, date and time of the meeting;
 - b. The general nature of the business to be transacted at the meeting;
 - c. In the case of a proposed special resolution, the text or substance of that proposed special resolution and
 - d. With reasonable prominence a statement that:
 - i. A member entitled to attend and vote is entitled to appoint a proxy using the form set out in Section 184 of the Act or, where that is allowed, one or more proxies to attend, speak and vote instead of him or her;
 - ii A proxy need not be a member;
 - iii The time by which the proxy must be received at the Company's registered office or some other place within the State as is specified in the statement for that purpose.
41. The accidental omission to give notice of a meeting to, or the non-receipt of notice of a meeting by any person entitled to receive notice shall not invalidate the proceedings of the meeting.

PROCEEDINGS AT GENERAL MEETING

42. No business shall be transacted at any General Meeting unless a quorum is present when the meeting begins. Six or one third of the Members of the Company whichever is the greater, whether present in person or by proxy shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of any General meeting of the Company properly convened.
43. If, within half an hour from the time appointed for a meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting, if convened upon a requisition of members, shall be dissolved, in any other case it shall stand adjourned to the same day in the next week at the same time and place or such other place as the Chairperson may appoint and if at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting, the members present shall be a quorum.
44. The Chairperson of the Board if present, shall preside as Chairperson of the meeting.
45. If the Chairperson of the Board is not present at any Meeting, the members present shall choose one of their number to be Chairperson.
46. The Chairperson may with the consent of any meeting at which a quorum is present adjourn the meeting from time to time and from place to place but no business shall be transacted at the adjourned meeting other than business left unfinished at the meeting of which the adjournment took place. When a meeting is adjourned for ten days or more notice of the adjourned meeting shall be given as in the case of the original meeting.
47. At any General Meeting a resolution put to the vote of the meeting shall be decided on a show of hands, unless a poll is demanded in accordance with Section 189 of the Act and a Declaration by the Chairperson that the resolution has on a show of hands been carried or carried unanimously, or by a particular majority, or lost, and an entry to that effect in the book of proceedings of the Company shall be conclusive evidence of the fact without proof of the number or the proportion of the votes recorded in favour of or against that resolution.
48. No addition, alteration or amendment shall be made to or in the provisions of these Articles of Association for the time being in force unless the same shall have been proposed as a Special Resolution at a General Meeting of the Company and adopted with not less than three-quarters of the members present voting in favour
49. For the purposes of these Articles any resolution deemed to be a Special Resolution shall be deemed not to be adopted unless not less than three quarters of the members present at the meeting at which the motion is proposed vote in favour of its adoption.

VOTES OF MEMBERS AT GENERAL MEETINGS

50. Each member at present in person and every proxy shall have one vote but such that no individual member shall have more than one vote.
51. No objection shall be raised to the qualification of any voter except at the meeting or adjourned meeting at which the vote objected to is given or tendered and every vote not disallowed at such meeting shall be valid for all purposes. Any such objection made in due time shall be referred to the Chairperson of the meeting, whose decision shall be final and conclusive.

52. Votes of members at General Meetings may be made by proxy provided that the Form of Proxy as set out at Article 56 below is duly signed by the member appointing the proxy and lodged with the Company in accordance with the requirements set out in the notice of the meeting.
53. The instrument appointing a proxy shall be in writing –
 - a. Under the hand of the appointer or of his or her attorney duly authorised in writing and
 - b. If the appointer is a body corporate either under seal of the body corporate or under the hand of an officer or attorney of it duly authorised in writing.
54. The Instrument of Proxy and the power of attorney or other authority, if any, under which it is signed or a notarially certified copy of that power or authority shall be deposited at the registered office of the Company or at such other place within the State as is specified for that purpose in the notice convening the meeting, and shall be deposited not later than the following time –
 - a. 48 hours before the time for holding the meeting or adjourned meeting at which the person named in the instrument proposes to vote or
 - b. In the case of a poll, 48 hours before the time appointed for the taking of the poll.
55. The depositing of the Instrument of Proxy may, rather than its being effected by sending or delivering the instrument, be effected by communicating the instrument to the Company by electromagnetic means (as defined in Section 2 of the Act) and this article applies to the depositing of anything else referred to in the previous article.
56. An instrument appointing a proxy shall be in the following form or a form as near thereto as circumstances permit –

{NAME} Public Participation Network Company Limited by Guarantee

[name of member] ("the Member") of [address of member] being a member of the Company hereby appoint/s [name and address of proxy] or failing him or her [name and address of alternative proxy] as the proxy of the Member to attend, speak and vote for the Member on behalf of the Member at the (annual or extraordinary, as the case may be) general meeting of the Company to be held on the [date of meeting] and at any adjournment of the meeting.

The proxy is to vote as follows:

Voting instructions to proxy

(Choice to be marked with an "X")

Number or description of resolution	In Favour	Abstain	Against

Unless otherwise instructed the proxy will vote as he or she thinks fit.

Signature of Member _____

Dated (date) _____

VOTING ON A POLL

57. At any general meeting a poll may be demanded: –
 - a. by the Chairperson of the meeting; or
 - b. by at least three members present in person or by proxy; or
 - c. by any member or members present in person or by proxy and representing not less than one-tenth of the total voting rights of all the members having the right to vote at the meeting.
58. The demand for a poll may be withdrawn.
59. A poll demanded on the election of a Chairperson or on a question of adjournment shall be taken forthwith.
60. A poll demanded on any other question shall be taken at such time as the Chairperson of the meeting directs, and any business other than that on which a poll is demanded may be proceeded with pending the taking of the poll.
61. The instrument appointing a proxy to vote at a meeting of the Company shall be deemed also to confer authority to demand or join in demanding a poll and, for the purposes of Articles 57 and 58 a demand by a person as a proxy for a member shall be the same as a demand of the member.
62. Where there is an equality of votes, whether on a show of hands or on a poll, the Chairperson of the meeting at which the show of hands takes place or at which the poll is demanded, shall be entitled to a second or casting vote.

FINANCE

63. The Board shall cause adequate accounting records to be kept. Adequate accounting records shall be deemed to have been maintained if they comply with Section 282 (1) to 282 (3) of the Act and explain the Company's transactions and facilitate the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, financial position and profit or loss of the Company.
64. The accounting records shall be kept at the registered office of the Company or, subject to Section 283 of the Act, at such other place as the Board shall think fit and shall at all reasonable times be open to the inspection of the officers of the Company and by other persons entitled pursuant to the a Act.
65. The Board shall from time to time determine whether and to what extent and at what times and places and under what conditions and regulations the financial statements and accounting records of the Company or any of them shall be open to the inspection of members, not Directors and no member (not being a Board member) shall have any right of inspection of financial statement or accounting record of the Company, except as conferred by statute, this Constitution or authorised by the Board or by the Company in General Meeting.
66. The Board shall in accordance with the Act, cause to be prepared and placed before the Company's Annual General Meeting the statutory financial statements of the company, the Director's Report in relation to it, and the statutory auditor's report on those financial statements and the Director's report as are required by the Act to be prepared and laid before the Annual general Meeting of the Company.

67. A copy of the statutory financial statements of the company, the Director's Report in relation to it, and the statutory auditor's report on those financial statements and the Director's report, shall not less than 21 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting be sent to every person entitled under Section 338(1) of the Act to receive them.

AUDIT

68. Auditors shall be appointed and their duties regulated in accordance Chapters 18 and 19 of Part 6 of the Act.

NOTICES

69. A Notice may be given by the Company to any member by delivery either personally or by sending it to such person by post to the address (if any) within Ireland last supplied to the Company by the member as the address for the giving of notice to them. Notice may also be given by electronic means (as defined in Section 2(1) of the Act, by sending it to such electronic address as has last been supplied to the Company by the member as the e-mail or other electronic address for correspondence.
70. Where a notice is sent by post, service of the notice shall be deemed to be effected by properly addressing and pre-paying and posting a letter containing the notice and to have been effected at the expiration of twenty four hours after the letter containing the same was posted.

THE SEAL

71. The seal shall be used only by the authority of the Board or of a committee of Board authorised by the Board in that behalf, and every instrument to which the seal shall be affixed shall be signed by a member of Board and shall be countersigned by the Secretary or by a second member of Board or by some other person appointed by the members of Board for that purpose.

INDEMNITY

72. Every Member, Director or other Officer of the Company (including all Members of its Committees) shall be entitled to be indemnified out of the assets of the Company against all losses or liabilities which he/she may sustain or incur in or about the execution of the duties of his/her office or otherwise in relation thereto; and no Director or other officer of the Company shall be liable for any loss, damage or misfortune which may happen to or be incurred by the Company in the execution of the duties of his/her office or in relation thereto where that Director or other Officer has acted in good faith in carrying out their fiduciary duty as a Director or other Officer of the company.
73. The Company shall take out and maintain in force at all times appropriate Insurance in respect of the indemnity referred to at Article 72 above.

Sample Complaints Procedure

{NAME} Complaints Procedure

{NAME} Public Participation Network ({NAME} PPN) is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you may have about our service.

If we got something wrong, we will apologise and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

When to use this Complaints Procedure

When you complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us (e.g. issues relating to your grant application or appeals to the Local Authority) and we will then advise you as best we can about how to make your concerns known.

Informal Resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things as soon as possible and in the easiest and most direct way. If you have a complaint, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. However, they may need time to look into it, which can take up to five (5) working days.

If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your complaint, we will bring them to the Secretariat and the Plenary. If the person you dealt with can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for your complaint to be formally investigated.

How to Complain Formally

You can complain in any of the ways below:

- You can ask for a copy of our complaint form from the person with whom you are already in contact.
- You can get in touch with our Resource Worker on telephone {NUMBER} if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- You can use the form on our website at {WEBSITE} (only use if applicable)
- You can e mail us at {EMAIL ADDRESS}
- You can write a letter to us at the following address:
- {ADDRESS}
- We also aim to have complaint forms available at all of our reception and common areas. Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available in (e.g.: large print, etc.)

What Should You Include in Your Complaint?

Remember to state your name, address and telephone number (and email, if applicable) and whether you are acting on behalf of someone else.

- Briefly describe what your complaint is about stating relevant dates and times, if applicable.
- List your specific concerns starting with the most important concern.
- Be clear about what you are hoping to achieve (for example an apology, explanation, etc.)
- State your preferred method of communication.

It will assist the Resource Worker if extra information and/or copies of relevant documents are attached to your complaint.

Dealing with Your Complaint

We will formally acknowledge your complaint within a maximum of five (5) working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.

We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements for example, if you have language difficulties.

We will deal with your complaint in an open and honest way. We will make sure that your interactions with us in the future do not suffer just because you have made a complaint.

If you are making a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your complaint. If your complaint is straightforward, we will usually ask a member of staff to look into it and get back to you. In some cases, if the complaint is serious, we may ask someone from outside the PPN to investigate.

We will set out to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days.

If your complaint is more complex we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- give you regular updates (INSERT TIMEFRAME FOR UPDATES) on any progress made

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

When investigating your complaint, we will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or email, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Putting Things Right

If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

Learning Lessons

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. Our Secretariat considers a summary of all complaints on a regular basis as well as details of any serious complaints.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

What to do if you Need Help

Our staff will aim to help you make your complaint known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact who may be able to assist you.

What We Expect from You

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff and volunteers have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

Confidentiality

Your complaint will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and at all times in accordance with data protection legislation.

Appendix – Complaints Form

A: YOUR DETAILS

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

Evening Number: _____

Please let us know how you prefer to be contacted: _____

Your requirements

If our usual way of dealing with complaints is difficult for you, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

B: MAKING A COMPLAINT ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE

Their Name: _____

Their Address: _____

What is your relationship to them? _____

Why are you making the complaint on their behalf? _____

C: YOUR COMPLAINT (Please use the Notes pages if needed)

What do you think we did wrong, or failed to do? _____

Describe how you, or the person you are representing, suffered or has been affected

What do you think should be done to put things right?

Have you already put your concern to the person responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Signature: _____

When you have completed this form, please send it to:

{NAME}

{ROLE WITHIN PPN}

{ADDRESS}

NOTES: _____

Sample Representatives' Charter

Introduction

{NAME} Public Participation Network (PPN) realises that all those who represent the network need to be supported, respected and informed in order to fulfil their role and their potential as a Representative and that all representatives need to be clear on their role. With this in mind this Charter lays out responsibilities, roles and rights for the PPN's Representatives, Linkage Groups/Thematic Networks and the Secretariat and also for the Committees & Boards that the Representatives sit on.

{NAME} PPN recognises that it is not always possible to have meetings prior to Representatives attending their relevant Committee or Group meeting and it is understood that consultation between the Representative and the Linkage Group/Thematic Network may be via email, phone or other means.

{NAME} PPN is appreciative of the experience and knowledge that Representatives bring to their roles, and the time that Representatives give, this helps to make the PPN a stronger and more effective voice on behalf of community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in {NAME}.

PPNs have representatives sitting on a wide range of communities across multiple thematic areas. Many of these are Local Authority based, but as the PPN develops this will widen to local agencies, forums and boards also. Representation structures include;

- PPN Secretariat
- Strategic Policy Committees (SPC)
- Joint Policing Committees (JPC)
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Other Forums, Boards and Committees

The term of office held by a PPN Representative varies according to the structure.

Responsibilities of the PPN to the Representatives

- Representatives are {NAME} PPN's most valuable resource and our organisation aims to encourage and support them in their role by:
- Ensuring that Representatives are provided with an induction to the PPN
- Providing training for representatives where possible.
- Be familiar with the Representatives and the role of the Committees and Groups that they have representation on.
- Listen to the issues raised by Representatives and respond promptly to these issues.
- Take the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the PPN.
- Consult directly with the Representative, or through the Linkage group/Thematic Network, to discuss any matters to be raised at meetings
- Ensure that Representatives are advised directly, or through the Linkage Groups/Thematic Network, of any consultations or issues the PPN or Secretariat is undertaking.
- Treat all Representatives in accordance with the PPN's Policies and adhere to the PPN's Charter.
- Provide the Representative with a clear indication of decisions made that might impact on their work on behalf of the PPN

- Ensure feedback from Representatives is shared with PPN member groups.
- {NAME} PPN will ensure that Representatives receive out of pocket/travel expenses to enable them to participate in committees they were elected to as per the {NAME} PPN Travel and Expenses Policy.

Responsibilities of the Linkage Group/Thematic Network to the PPN Representatives.

- Elect and Support Representatives to sit on Committees and Groups.
- Recognise that the Linkage Group/Thematic Network is representative of the PPN and part of this larger network
- Recognise that Linkage Groups/Thematic Network can operate quite informally and that each Linkage Group may operate differently.
- Take the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the Linkage Group/Thematic Network.
- Listen to the issues raised by Representatives and respond promptly to these issues.
- Engage directly with the Representative to discuss any matters to be raised at meetings.
- Feed back to their own member groups on the work of the Linkage Group and Committee.
- Adhere to the PPN's Charter and policies.

Responsibilities of Committees to the PPN Representatives

- Recognise that PPN Representatives are there to represent a diverse range of community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups in the Local Authority area.
- Provide a briefing to all members of the Committee or Group on the role of the PPN and its Representatives.
- Treat PPN Representatives with respect and equally involve them in the work and decision-making of the Committee or Group.
- To hold at least some meetings at times, dates and locations that facilitate the participation of volunteers. Ideally these dates should be set annually.
- To provide the PPN Representatives with an induction to the Committee or Group clearly outlining the Terms of Reference for the Committee, Committee Standing Orders, how to have issues put on the agenda etc.
- Work collaboratively with PPN Representatives to ensure that they have an opportunity to input on matters and issues that they are there to represent.
- Provide Minutes and Agendas for meetings at least two weeks in advance of meetings to allow the PPN Representative an opportunity to gain input from the PPN/Linkage Group.
- To offer relevant training to PPN Representatives and to provide support to them in interpreting technical documents.
- Ensure that any conflict of interest are clearly stated and dealt with appropriately.
- Produce an agreed meeting outcome document at the end of each meeting which can be shared with the PPN membership
- Be familiar with and adhere to the PPN's Charter and Policies with regard to Representatives.

Responsibilities of Representatives

- To be committed to the aims, objectives and principles of {NAME} Public Participation Network.
- Be willing to be representative of the PPN as a whole and to advocate for the PPN, Secretariat and Linkage Group/Thematic Network.
- Ask for support or backup when needed.
- Be willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant Committee or Group that they sit on.
- Take the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the PPN and the Committee or Group.
- Be willing and able to engage with the PPN/Linkage group/Thematic Network for consultation and identification of issues either through meetings, electronic or other means. Ensuring that there is an agreed record of relevant discussion and all decisions
- Ensure that any conflict of interest is clearly stated in relation to discussions and decision making on committees
- Clearly indicate whether feedback provided reflects a factual view of the meeting or a personal view.
- Recognise that the Linkage Group/Thematic Network or PPN is the decision-making body and that decisions may conflict with their own opinion.
- Provide a brief written report from each committee meeting they attend on the PPN's behalf. The report should provide a brief synopsis of any discussions at the meeting and the resulting decision using the PPN Reporting Template
- Where there are multiple PPN Reps on one committee, a commitment should be made to meet prior to the meeting, to rotate the reporting responsibility and to ensure that the report is approved by all Reps prior to further circulation.
- Have due regard to issues of confidentiality when reporting from meetings.
- Ensure that the Resource worker is kept informed of all meetings attended and reports issued
- To be readily contactable by members of the PPN, through the Resource Worker.
- Adhere to the PPN's Charter and Policies.

4

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
Other Comments/ Actions required from PPN			

Date of next meeting		Signed (PPN Representative)	
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Sample Nomination Form

{NAME} Public Participation Network

Nomination form for

{NAME} Committee

Note any person who wants to be considered as a PPN Representative; must

1. Complete in full the appropriate nomination form
2. Nominees should ensure that they understand the time commitment, required attendance etc. relating to the position applied for
3. Be proposed and seconded by 2 members of their own PPN Member Group
4. **{INSERT ANY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BOARD / COMMITTEE}**
5. Include a **short Biography (max 200 words) of the nominee** for inclusion on the Ballot Sheet
6. Ensure nomination form is returned to {NAME} PPN by closing date for applications by {DATE}

Nominating Group: _____ Membership No.: _____

College (please tick 1): **Social Inclusion** ☐ **Community & Voluntary** ☐ **Environment** ☐

Nominee Name: _____

Nominee address: _____

Nominee Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Proposed by: _____ Position in Group: _____

Signed by Proposer: _____

Seconded by: _____ Position in Group: _____

Signed by Seconder: _____

Signed by nominee: _____ Date: _____

This form collects your name, email & phone number only for the purpose of {NAME} PPN elections and related communications; it will not be used for any other purpose.

Notes:

- In the event of more nominations than vacancies available; an election will be held
- A panel will be created following election process to fill any current or future vacant positions
- {NAME} PPN Representatives are expected to gather and present the views and opinions of member organisations (including, but not limited to, his/her own group) of the PPN body which elected him/her
- All {NAME} PPN Reps are required to sign the Representatives Charter and to adhere to {NAME} PPN reporting mechanisms, Constitution, Policies etc.
- PPN representative expenses will be paid in accordance with the {NAME} PPN Travel and Expenses Policy
- {NAME} PPN is non-political, non-sectarian and adheres to CVSP 8/2018 re PPNs and Engagement in the Political Process

Sample Travel and Expenses Policy

Travel and Expenses Policy for {NAME} Public Participation Network 2019

Purpose: Travel and Expenses Policy for members conducting PPN business.

Scope: Secretariat Members, PPN Representatives and other PPN members and staff if requested by the Secretariat to travel on PPN business.

Policy and Procedures: PPN Representatives (those representing the PPN on local decision making structures) are entitled to make a request for travel and expenses for carrying out approved PPN business. A request for travel expenses can only be made when travel and expenses cannot be covered by another source (e.g. is not paid by the Board or Committee being attended by the Representative).

What Travel is Eligible?

- Travel by PPN representatives to the Secretariat Meetings and any other events organised by the PPN or external organisation which {NAME} PPN wishes them to participate in.
- Travel may be by standard class public transport or private car.
- PPN Representatives who do not have access to other means of transport may use taxis only upon prior approval of the PPN Secretariat.

Making Travel and Expenses Claims:

- Claims will only be made when payment of expenses cannot be covered by another source.
- Members must state the start and end point of each journey, the form of transport, and the purpose of the journey.

Receipts:

- Other than mileage and standard expenses rates, no reimbursements will be made unless receipts are submitted. (E-mailed photos, scans or originals are acceptable).
- Claims for travel and subsistence will be processed through online banking only.
- {NAME} PPN runs an annual budget and claims may only be made within the year they are incurred.
- To submit a claim {INCLUDE DETAILS OF HOW CLAIMS ARE TO BE PROCESSED}

Rates:

The rates for Travel and Expenses payable by {NAME} PPN are as per public sector norms. These are currently:

Official Motor Travel Expenses - (Public Sector from 1st April 2017 to present)				Official Subsistence Rates - (Public Sector from 1st April 2017 to present)			
Engine Size	0 – 1200cc	1200 – 1500 cc	1500cc and over	After 5 hours	After 10 hours	Overnight	Overnight Dublin
Cents per km	37.95	39.86	44.79	13.71	33.61	133.00	167.00

Authorising Claims: Claims will be processed by {NAME of ROLE} and Authorised by {NAME of ROLE}.

Reimbursement of Expenses: Expenses will only be reimbursed if they are:

- Submitted on the {NAME} PPN Travel and Expenses Claim Form which is fully completed in line with this policy.
- Accompanied by original receipts or e-mail photos/scans of receipts where appropriate – receipts are not necessary for agreed mileage and subsistence rates.
- Appropriately authorized as above.

Other Expenses: (Optional)

Should payment of childcare expenses, or for example payments for missed meals for those living in direct provision be necessary to enable participation by Secretariat members or {NAME} PPN representatives in PPN activities those representatives should seek prior approval by contacting {EMAIL} before incurring those expenses. Childcare expenses will be limited to a maximum of €15.00 per hour and may only be charged for the duration of the event plus the travel time to and from the venue.

Overnight expenses: {NAME} PPN will not be paying overnight expenses for travel to any event unless an overnight stay has been approved in advance by the Secretariat.

Sample Email and Internet Usage Policy

1. Policy Statement

{NAME} is committed to ensuring internet, email and fax usage that protects the organisation and its interests, and ensures requirements are met concerning dignity at work for all employees, and the protection of the individual's right to privacy.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To ensure that {NAME} has clear policies outlining its internet and email usage.
- 2.2. To set out practical guidelines for transferring person-identifiable information (information which could be used to establish the identity of an individual) by fax.
- 2.3. To outline procedures in relation to social networking.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all email, internet and fax usage through the organisations email, internet and fax system or on any work hardware being used in or out of work premises. It applies to all staff and visitors within the organisation. It also includes people from other agencies conducting in reach services in {NAME} for the time they are on the premises.

4. Email and Internet Use

- 4.1. The email system is to be used solely for the purposes of {NAME} and not for personal purposes of the employees.
- 4.2. Employees are permitted to use the internet for personal purposes during lunch breaks (or for duration of time e.g. 30 minutes per day). However the limits of internet use outlined in this policy must be clearly followed.
- 4.3. Where an employer has allowed the use of the company's communications facilities for private use by employees, such private communications may be subject to some surveillance, for example, to ensure adequate virus checking.

5. Sending Emails

- 5.1. E-mail is effectively on official headed paper and can be traced back to place, date and time of sending. Staff need to ensure they are satisfied with email content and that it has been approved at the appropriate level. Important email correspondence should use the 'confirm receipt' function.
- 5.2. Staff are not to instigate or forward "unofficial mail" to users either within or outside the office which may be offensive or disruptive to others or which may be construed as harassment.
- 5.3. Staff are not to use another's email account, or allow another employee to send from their email account. If sharing computers in an office, then staff are to log off when leaving the computer.

6. Opening Emails

- 6.1. Do not open any files that look suspicious or are from an unknown sender.
- 6.2. Should you receive material which you find offensive or abusive or time wasting respond to it just as you would an offensive letter: complain directly to the sender and bring it to the attention of the sender's employing organisation in an appropriate way.
- 6.3. In the case of any Spam mail don't issue any reply.

7. Security

- 7.1. Do not leave your computer without securing the session by password or signing off.

- 7.2. If you think someone knows your password, ask for it to be changed as soon as possible. Maintaining the privacy of your password is your responsibility and consequently you are responsible for any abuses taking place using your name and password.

8. Inappropriate Email and Internet Use

- 8.1. Emails may not contain statements or content that is libellous, offensive, harassing, illegal, derogatory, or discriminatory. Inappropriate or offensive messages such as racial, sexual, or religious slurs or jokes are prohibited. Sexually explicit messages or images, cartoons or jokes are prohibited.
- 8.2. Staff are not to use communal email systems to disseminate non work related information, except with the prior approval of management
- 8.3. Staff are not to make derogatory comments regarding gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the travelling community.
- 8.4. Internet must be used in a way that complies with current legislation, is deemed acceptable to the organisation, and does not create unnecessary risk to the organisation. In particular the following is deemed unacceptable use or behaviour by employees:
 - 8.4.1. visiting internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or otherwise illegal material
 - 8.4.2. using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud, or software, film or music piracy
 - 8.4.3. using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users
 - 8.4.4. downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licences
 - 8.4.5. hacking into unauthorised areas
 - 8.4.6. sending defamatory and/or knowingly false material about {NAME}.
 - 8.4.7. undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources
 - 8.4.8. introducing any form of malicious software into the organisations network.

9. Monitoring of Email and Internet Systems

- 9.1. The organisation cannot at any time access private email accounts.
- 9.2. Monitoring of sites accessed on work computers may be undertaken by the organisation to ensure adherence to the internet and email policy or other relevant organisational policies.
- 9.3. Records of which sites have been accessed may be referred to if required in a situation of suspected breach of internet usage policy. If any illegal activity is suspected in relation to private email usage the Gardaí will be contacted, in certain circumstances the Gardaí will be entitled to access private email.
- 9.4. The organisation may access work email accounts and emails. In this instance staff will be informed prior to the accessing of email correspondence if at all possible. In relation to the privacy of emails received from people not in the organisation, all content will be treated confidentially by the Co-ordinator.
- 9.5. {NAME} uses software to monitor any inappropriate websites visited. Staff will be made aware if any misuse of company technology is detected; through the Co-ordinator.

10. Sanctions

- 10.1. Where it is believed that an employee has failed to comply with this policy, disciplinary actions will be implemented.

11. Privacy in the Workplace

- 11.1. Employees in the workplace in Ireland have a legitimate right to a certain degree of privacy in the workplace. However, their right to privacy must be balanced with the legitimate rights and interests of the employer. Any personal data from or related to an employee's work e-mail account or his or her use of the internet that is legitimately stored by an employer must be accurate and up to date and not kept for longer than necessary.
- 11.2. The employer must put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure that any personal data it holds is secure and safe from outside intrusion.

12. Social Media

- 12.1. {NAME} does not discriminate against employees who use social media sites (facebook, twitter etc.) for personal use on their own time. However:
 - 12.1.1. Bloggers are personally responsible for their commentary.
 - 12.1.2. Staff cannot use the Internet to harass, threaten, discriminate against, or disparage other employees or anyone associated with {NAME}. Negative statements about {NAME}, its services, its team members, or any other related entity may lead to disciplinary action.
 - 12.1.3. Staff cannot post photographs or videos of other team members without express written consent and authorisation from management.
 - 12.1.4. Staff cannot write anything that conflicts with any areas of confidentiality, or negatively reflects on the professionalism of the organisation.
- 12.2. Staff should not use social media such as facebook and twitter unless this is a stated part of a PPN programme.
- 12.3. If social media is permitted as part of a programme, staff should take care to conduct exchanges in with the same level of professionalism that they would conduct a face to face conversation. Staff should also be aware that comments left can be viewed by others, and therefore that they should be careful about any information they may wish to keep confidential.
- 12.4. If the organisation uses video clips on a media format such as YouTube, it is important that permission has been received.
- 12.5. Your personal social media profile may state that you are involved with the PPN. In this regard, you must avoid any confusion by stating that:
 - You are not representing the PPN in any official capacity.
 - All views, comments and opinions are strictly personal (i.e. your own and not those of the PPN)
 - All views, comments and opinions are in no way associated with the PPN.

Sample Secretariat Code of Conduct

General

The membership of the {NAME} PPN Secretariat is limited to {NUMBER} representatives that is {INSERT CRITERIA}.

Rights of Secretariat Members

- The right to receive correct information – agendas, minutes etc.
- The right to be heard.
- The right to be consulted and included in decision making.
- The right to respect from colleagues.
- The right to confidentiality around sensitive issues.
- The right not to participate in any discussion or vote on grounds of conflict of interest.
- The right to make a valid claim for reimbursement for expenses incurred in the work of the Secretariat.

Responsibilities of Secretariat Members

- To attend all meetings or to send an apology to the Secretariat.
- To participate in at least one sub group of the Secretariat.
- To adhere to the standing orders and abide by the constitution.
- To participate in decision making.
- To carry out any tasks agreed.
- To contribute your skills to the projects of the Secretariat.
- To be loyal to the Secretariat and its members.
- To respect the Secretariat and its work.
- To respect the confidentiality of the business of the Secretariat.
- To be accountable to other members of the Secretariat and to the PPN membership as a whole.
- To ensure that all expense claims are correct and relate to the work of the Secretariat.

Attendance at meetings

Members should make every effort to attend all meetings and to that end:

- The Secretariat shall produce a schedule of meetings once per year of all secretariat meetings.
- Any member missing three meetings without giving apologies shall be replaced by convening a meeting of the body from which the representative was appointed at its earliest convenience.

Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest can be described as any form of personal interest, which may affect, or might reasonably be thought to affect, on an individual's impartiality in decision-making. Personal interest includes an interest of a relative or connected person or organisation.

In accordance with the Ethics Act 2005, a member must disclose any pecuniary or other beneficial interest in, or material to, any matter which is to be considered by the organisation and in such case he or she shall;

- Disclose to the Secretariat the nature of the interest in advance of any consideration of the matter.
- Neither influence nor seek to influence a decision relating to the matter.
- Take no part in any consideration of the matter.
- Not take part in any vote on the matter to influence the decision of the Secretariat or be considered part of the quorum for that matter.

If a disclosure is made at a meeting of the Secretariat, particulars of the disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting concerned, and for so long as the matter to which the disclosure relates is being dealt with by the meeting, the person by whom the disclosure is made shall not be counted in the quorum for the meeting.

In addition in such cases the Secretary to the Secretariat shall maintain a separate record of the discussion (to which the member shall not have access).

Where a question arises as to whether or not a matter for consideration by the Secretariat relates to the interests of a member or a person or body connected with that Secretariat member, the Facilitator / Chairperson of the meeting should determine the question.

Breaches of Code of Conduct Policy

The {NAME} PPN Secretariat reserves the right to uphold the conditions of the Code of Conduct Policy and will take the following action:

In matters relating to code of conduct at meetings, all matters of order are the responsibility of the Chairperson. In such cases the Chairperson has the right to the following courses of action:

- Deem a matter or proposal “Out Of Order”.
- Deem the behaviour or conduct of a member to be in breach of the code of conduct. In this circumstance the member can be warned of their conduct and can be asked to leave the meeting either temporarily or permanently.
- Suspend or adjourn a meeting or part of a meeting

For all other matters where a Breach of the Code of Conduct is suspected the Secretariat will gather all evidence and take all necessary steps up to and including permanently removing representatives from the PPN Secretariat.

Sample Grievance Procedure

Policy Statement

- 1.1. {NAME} aims to ensure a harmonious working environment is maintained for the benefit of all and to resolve problems and grievances promptly and fairly.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The grievance procedure describes the process by which a PPN Worker or volunteer may formally forward a grievance regarding any condition of their work.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy covers all PPN Workers and volunteers within the organisation. There are also provisions for people from other agencies providing services to {NAME} for the time they are on the premises.

4. Glossary of Terms and Definitions

- 4.1. A grievance is defined as a complaint which any PPN Worker or volunteer of the PPN has concerning any aspect of their work on behalf of the PPN, working environment or professional working relationships.

5. Principles

- 5.1. All grievances should aim to be resolved in an informal basis with the person involved, if possible.
- 5.2. Any proceedings should be conducted honestly, fairly and without bias.
- 5.3. Proceedings should not be unduly delayed.
- 5.4. The person(s) against whom the grievance/complaint is made should have the opportunity, and be given a reasonable time to put forward their side of the event/s before resolution is attempted.

6. Process

6.1. Informal Grievance

- 6.1.1. The affected individual should attempt to resolve the complaint as close to the source as possible.
- 6.1.2. If the PPN Worker / Volunteer does not want to deal directly with the individual with whom they have the grievance, they should discuss this issue with their direct line manager, or the Secretariat Staff Liaison Committee (if in place).

6.2. Formal Grievances

- 6.2.1. It is understood however that informal resolution is not always possible and that a formal procedure may be required to ensure the swift and fair resolution of matters. Any PPN Worker / Volunteer, who has a grievance or complaint related to the PPN that cannot be resolved through informal channels, should raise the matter with their direct line manager or the Staff Liaison Committee of the Secretariat (if in place) immediately in writing. If the matter relating to the PPN Worker itself concerns the PPN Worker's immediate line manager, then the grievance should be taken to the Staff Liaison Committee of the Secretariat (if in place) or the HR Department of the Local Authority (if employed by the Local Authority). Notification should include: the substance of the grievance; the remedy sought; and the fact that this is a formal grievance notification.
- 6.2.2. A mediation process may be an appropriate intervention at this stage. Mediation can be

suggested and arranged by the Secretariat Staff Liaison Committee, where this is agreed to by all parties. In the case of mediation the outcomes and process will be confidential between the parties involved in the process. The mediator will be required to establish a mediation agreement at the onset of the session; this will need to be agreed by all involved parties.

- 6.2.3. If the issue is unable to be resolved to the PPN Worker's satisfaction at the time; then a formal written grievance hearing should be initiated.
- 6.3. **Grievance Hearing**
 - 6.3.1. The Rotating Chair / Facilitator will call a meeting as necessary.
 - 6.3.2. The PPN Worker taking the grievance has a right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative.
 - 6.3.3. After the meeting the Rotating Chair / Facilitator will give a decision on the outcome of the grievance. If a PPN Worker is unhappy with the decision they can lodge an appeal.
 - 6.3.4. Where a grievance involves another PPN Worker. The person conducting the grievance hearing will meet with both PPN Workers separately. If the PPN Worker has specific questions for another member PPN Worker these should be put in writing. If both PPN Workers agree, a combined meeting with all parties can also be undertaken. The decision as to what method is most appropriate for the resolution of the grievance will be that of the Secretariat.
 - 6.3.5. If the grievance involves another PPN Worker they will be requested to attend a meeting to discuss the issues and will be given reasonable notification which facilitates them to bring a colleague or trade union representative.
 - 6.3.6. The meeting will be conducted to ensure that all parties have the right to explain their views and to respond to the other parties' comments and views.
 - 6.3.7. If no communally agreed resolution is reached throughout the meeting process then the Secretariat will make a decision on the outcome of the grievance.
 - 6.3.8. If the grievance lies between a PPN Worker and the Rotating Chair / Facilitator, the party with the grievance should take this up with the Staff Liaison Committee of the Secretariat.
 - 6.3.9. If the outcome of the process leads to a disciplinary action, this will be conducted according to the disciplinary procedure. This will be undertaken by someone else in management other than the person involved in the investigation or grievance hearing. Appeals to this will be managed through the disciplinary appeals process.

7. Appeal

- 7.1. In most instances the organisation would expect the Secretariat's decision to be final and for the matter to come to a close. However the PPN Worker has the right to appeal the decision if he / she still feel aggrieved.
- 7.2. An employee who wishes to appeal against a grievance decision must do so within 5 working days from receipt of official correspondence. The appeal should contain the original formal grievance notification.
- 7.3. The appeal will be initiated by the PPN Worker sending, in writing, a request for an appeal. This should be addressed to the Rotating Chair / Facilitator who undertook the grievance hearing. The Rotating Chair / Facilitator must then contact the Staff Liaison Committee to instigate the establishment of an appeal committee and process.
- 7.4. At the request of a PPN Worker a grievance appeal committee will be established. This

committee can include members of the Secretariat other than the PPN Worker who was responsible for issuing the grievance outcome in question. The committee will have two or more members and no more than three members. The process undertaken by the appeal committee, will be:

- 7.4.1. A meeting will be called; this may either involve both parties together or may be better arranged as separate meetings to encourage full and frank discussion. Both parties will be informed of the date and time of the hearing, as well as the membership of the committee. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that both parties can attend on the date/s. The two parties are; 1) the staff member who has requested the appeal, and 2) the Rotating Chair / Facilitator who was responsible for issuing the grievance decision.
- 7.4.2. The PPN Worker will be made aware that they are entitled to representation by a trade union representative, a professional organisation, or a colleague;
- 7.4.3. Both parties will be asked to provide a verbal and/or written account of the situation and the reasons for their decision or appeal of the decision;
- 7.4.4. The committee will discuss the matter in private and has the right to seek further information from either party.
- 7.4.5. The PPN Worker taking the appeal will be informed of the decision in writing.

10 Sample Driving for Work Policy

Safe Driving Policy for {NAME} PPN

Aim: To avoid vehicle incident and at-fault work related road collision costs and injuries by promoting a safe driving culture within the organisation.

Objectives:

1. To make drivers aware of the main risks they face or create when driving for work
2. To make sure that employees and volunteers who drive vehicles in the course of their work demonstrate safe, efficient driving skills and other good road safety habits at all times.
3. To maintain all personal vehicles used for work purposes in a safe, clean and roadworthy condition to ensure the maximum safety of the drivers, occupants and other road users.

Code of Conduct for Driving:

While driving company or own vehicles for work purposes, employees and volunteers must comply with traffic legislation, be conscious of road safety and demonstrate safe driving and other good road safety habits.

The following actions will be viewed as serious breaches of conduct and dismissal / removal of duties may be a consequence:

- Drinking or being under the influence of drugs while driving
- Driving while disqualified or not correctly licensed
- Reckless or dangerous driving causing death or injury
- Failing to stop after a collision
- Acquiring penalty points leading to suspension of licence
- Any actions that warrant the suspension of a licence

Responsibilities of Employees and Volunteers while driving on behalf of the PPN

Every driver must:

- make sure they hold a current driver licence for the category of vehicle they are driving and this licence is carried when driving.
- immediately notify the Secretariat if their driver licence has been suspended or cancelled, or has had limitations placed upon it.
- be responsible and accountable for their actions when operating a vehicle or driving for the purposes of work.
- display the highest level of professional conduct when driving a company vehicle.
- regularly check the oil, tyre pressures, radiator and battery levels of vehicles they regularly use.
- comply with the Rules of The Road and the safe Driving for Work Handbook at all times.
- assess hazards while driving and anticipate 'what if' scenarios.
- drive within the legal speed limits, including driving to the conditions.
- wear a seat belt and make sure all occupants wear their seat belt at all times.
- only drive when fit to do so – never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including prescription and over the counter medication if they cause drowsiness.
- avoid distraction when driving – if you need to, adjust or set sat-navs / car stereos / mirrors before setting off. If you need to re-adjust whilst driving, pull over safely in order to do so.
- report any near-misses, crashes and scrapes, including those that do not result in injury, and follow the collision procedures outlined in this policy.

In addition, it is required that all drivers:

- take regular and adequate rest breaks, at least every two hours.
- stop when tired.
- plan their journeys, taking into account pre-journey work duties, the length of the trip and post-journey commitments.
- stay overnight if driving time and non-driving duties exceed 10 hours in one day.

11 Sample Vulnerable Adults Policy

{NAME} PPN Vulnerable Adults Policy

{NAME} Public Participation Network is committed to safeguarding the well-being of all those who participate in {NAME} PPN events, whether run in the centre, or any other locations, and all {NAME} PPN staff and volunteers have a responsibility to adhere to this policy as part of the organisation's educational programmes and activities.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

This document sets out the requirements for working with vulnerable adults at {NAME} Public Participation Network in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse: National Policy and Procedures, published by the Health Service Executive. The Designated Liaison Person, responsible for dealing with any concerns or reports regarding the safeguarding of {NAME} PPN participants is {NAME}.

Contents of this Policy are:

1. Definition of a vulnerable adult
2. Key principles in vulnerable adult protection and welfare
3. Identifying Abuse
4. Responding to and reporting vulnerable adult protection concerns
5. Mandatory Reporting
6. Consent
7. Record Keeping
8. Recruitment and Selection
9. {NAME} PPN Code of Behaviour
10. Annex: {NAME} PPN Incident form

1. Definition of a vulnerable adult:

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may require assistance to care for themselves, or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited. This may be because they have a disability (either intellectual or physical, or relating to mental health), a sensory impairment, are older and frail, or have some other form of illness.

Definition of a vulnerable person for the purposes of Garda vetting: The Garda Vetting Bureau (children and vulnerable persons) Act 2012 defines a vulnerable person as a person, other than a child, who (a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia, (b) has an intellectual disability, (c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or (d) has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree— (i) as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or (ii) that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

Incidents of physical and sexual assault, fraud and financial exploitation are crimes and should be reported to the Gardaí. In the case of Sexual Offences involving people with disabilities, specific provision is contained in Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993. Ireland is also a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Abuse of vulnerable adults can constitute the physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment or

neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time, it may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse.

2. Key principles in vulnerable adult protection and welfare:

Citizenship confers a status on an individual whereby their fundamental right to dignity and respect and other basic human rights as well as their rights to participation in society are upheld and supported by the Constitution, by Ireland's human rights treaty commitments and by the laws of the State. Person centeredness is that principle which places the person as an individual at the heart and centre of any exchange requiring the provision or delivery of a service. Services are organised around what is important to the person from his / her perspective. – Empowerment is that principle which recognises the right of the individual to lead as independent a life as possible and that supports the individual in every practical way to realise that right. Self-direction recognises the right of the individual to self-determination to the greatest extent possible including where this entails risk. Abiding by this principle means ensuring that risks are recognized, understood and minimised as far as possible, while supporting the person to pursue their goals and preferences.

3. Identifying Abuse:

Vulnerable adult abuse is any mistreatment that violates a person's human and civil rights. The abuse can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering. A vulnerable adult may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time: Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing, pinching, shaking, misusing medication, scalding, restraint, hair pulling. Sexual abuse such as rape, sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not or could not have consented, or to which they were pressurised into consenting. Psychological or emotional abuse such as threats of harm or abandonment, being deprived of social or any other form of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, being prevented from receiving services or support. Financial or material abuse such as theft, fraud or exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, or inheritance, misuse of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect such as ignoring medical or physical care needs and preventing access to health, social care or educational services or withholding the necessities of life such as food, drink and heating. Discriminatory abuse such as that based on race or sexuality or a person's disability and other forms of harassment or slurs. Institutional abuse can sometimes happen in residential homes, nursing homes, hostels, holiday centres or hospitals when people are mistreated because of poor or inadequate care, neglect and poor practice that affects the whole of that service. Domestic abuse refers to the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence in close adult relationships. This includes violence perpetrated by a spouse, partner, son or daughter or any other person who has a close or blood relationship with the victim. The term 'domestic violence' goes beyond actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional abuse; the destruction of property; isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support; threats to others, including children; stalking; and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone. Elder Abuse is defined as "A single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person or violates their human and civil rights." 65 years of age is taken as the

point beyond which abuse may be considered to be elder abuse. Concerns in relation to elder abuse should be reported to the relevant Public Health Nurse or to the HSE Senior Case Worker for the Protection of Older People.

4. Responding to and reporting vulnerable adult protection concerns:

If you are concerned about the protection or welfare of a vulnerable adult, contact the Designated Liaison Person. It is recognised that adults have the right to self-determination and to make decisions, even if this means that they remain at risk. Where there are concerns regarding diminished capacity, consideration should be given to requesting a specialist assessment of the person's decision-making capacity in the context of the abuse allegations and the risk posed to the person. When the Designated Liaison Person receives a report about suspected or actual abuse, they should consider the wishes of the vulnerable adult and if there are reasonable grounds for reporting to the Statutory Authorities. This will mean: – Clarifying or getting more information about the matter; – Consulting with the vulnerable adult to hear his/her wishes etc.; – Where there is any doubt or uncertainty, consulting with the Statutory Authorities to obtain their advice on the situation; – Where there are concerns about the diminished capacity of the vulnerable adult, considering assessment of decision making capacity in the context of the abuse allegations and the risk posed to the person; – Making a formal referral to the Statutory Authorities (Protecting Our Future: Report of the working Group on Elder Abuse, September 2002) A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions will be recorded or noted internally by the Designated Liaison Person as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and earlier suspicions may provide important information for Statutory Authorities. A full written record of all decisions will be maintained by the Designated Liaison Person. In an emergency, where a person is at immediate risk, you should contact the Garda Síochána or Emergency Services on 999 or 112.

Confidentiality: All information concerned with the identification and reporting of vulnerable adult abuse is subject to best practice guidance on confidentiality. Where a vulnerable adult has capacity, their consent should be sought prior to disclosing information to another agency / Statutory Authorities.

5. Mandatory Reporting

Beyond the scope of this guidance document on reporting, all citizens should be aware that it is a legal requirement throughout Ireland for any person who knows or believes that a serious offence has been committed including an offence relating to Rape, Sexual Assault and False Imprisonment to report such information to An Garda Síochána and it is an offence not to do so where that failure cannot be reasonably excused. In current criminal legislation in Ireland (Section 4 Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information of Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012) it should be noted that complicated provisions appear within the context of defences available to persons charged with an offence relating to non-reporting of serious personal abuse. These warrant more detailed consideration in developing in detail the implementation process of any guidance adopted."

6. Consent

The consent of the vulnerable adult should be sought prior to reporting any matter to the civil authorities and onto family and care service providers. Sometimes adults do not want civil

authorities to take action to investigate or protect them from harm; People have a right to make such choices about reporting; however, if a criminal act is suspected, it must be reported to the civil authorities. If upon receipt of the concern, where the vulnerable adult does not give consent to reporting, and it is not clear that a criminal act has taken place, and where the designated person believes that others may also be at risk of harm, consultation should take place with the civil authorities as to the best course of action, in the absence of consent from the alleged victim. In considering the capacity of the vulnerable adult to give consent, the following factors should be taken into account:

- The adult has the capacity to understand what is being asked of him/her
- Sufficient information is given, in a way that the person understands, to enable him/her to make an informed decision
- Consent is not received through any form of coercion. If the vulnerable adult is unable to give informed consent, discussions should take place with their carer/guardian/close family about reporting concerns/allegations and, where appropriate, discussions should also take place with any medical or social work personnel. There may need to be a determination as to who can give consent on behalf of the vulnerable adult; in some instances, there may already be provision in place; consultation may be required with legal advisers and statutory personnel. Please note the designated liaison person should not make determinations around capacity to give consent, without consultation with appropriately trained and skilled personnel.

7. Record Keeping:

It is essential the designated liaison person keep contemporaneous records of all safeguarding concerns – this will include contacts, consultations and any actions taken. All records relating to vulnerable adult protection and welfare such as records of concerns, allegations or disclosures or reports to statutory authorities should be kept in a safe and confidential manner. Paper records should be stored in locked filing cabinets with restricted access. Records held on PCs, servers or mobile devices should be encrypted and password protected. As regards the retention of records normally all protection reporting records are held in perpetuity.

8. Recruitment and Selection

Safe recruitment is an integral part of good safeguarding practice. In addition to standard good HR practice (cross ref HR Recruitment policy), it should include:

- Seeking Garda vetting, and police clearance for other jurisdictions, and developing criteria on decision making regarding suitability in the event of disclosures
- Specific factors which would exclude applicants from working in the organisation
- Contracts agreed by management and workers (including that workers will comply with the organisation's protection and welfare policies
- All workers will receive induction in the vulnerable adult safeguarding policy and regular refresher or updating training will be provided as required.
- All staff whose roles include or could potentially include contact with vulnerable adults will receive appropriate safeguarding training, approved to national standards.

9. Management and Supervision:

All staff and volunteers whose roles or duties include or may include contact with vulnerable adults will receive appropriate support and supervision from their line manager or other appointed manager.

Allegations against {NAME} PPN personnel and volunteers: Should an allegation of abuse or inappropriate conduct in relation to a vulnerable adult be made against a {NAME} PPN employee, the following procedure will be followed:

The standard reporting procedure as above will be initiated on notification of the allegation, by the Designated Liaison Person, or by the Chairperson, as appropriate. The safety and welfare of the vulnerable adult is the foremost consideration and any necessary protective measures, proportionate to the risk will be taken (e.g. staff member removed from duties that involve contact with the vulnerable adult up to and including possible suspension with pay pending a full investigation). Parents / carers (including service providers) will be kept informed of steps taken as above.

1. The Resource Worker (or member of the Secretariat) will be appointed to advise the staff member or volunteer that an allegation has been made against them and the nature of the allegation. The person will be afforded an opportunity to respond.
2. The person will be informed that a report will be made to the statutory authorities and that {NAME} PPN will cooperate fully with any assessment or investigation that ensues. This should be undertaken without delay.
3. The Designated Liaison Person/ Rotating Chair will liaise closely with investigating bodies (HSE / An Garda Síochána) to ensure that actions taken by the organisation do not undermine or frustrate any investigations.
4. These steps will be followed with due regard for privacy and fair procedure of the individual involved.

Following advice from the statutory authorities an internal investigation under {NAME} PPN's Disciplinary and Grievance Policies may be undertaken

10. {NAME} PPN Code of Behaviour

The {NAME} PPN code of behaviour must be adhered to by all staff (whether full-time or part-time) or volunteers (whether full-time or part-time) at all times during events and activities. This can help to minimise the risk of harm or abuse to vulnerable adults, as well as help protect all staff and volunteers from unfounded accusation.

This code of behaviour sets out that:

- The safety of all participants is paramount and must be our first consideration in any contact with them.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every participant, and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Physical or verbal interactions with participants should never be punitive, aggressive, embarrassing or humiliating.
- When meeting vulnerable adults for the first time, introduce yourself and explain in appropriate language, who you are and why you are visiting them.
- Respect the ethos and practices of any service you visit.

Staff/Volunteers must NOT:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with vulnerable adults and should, conversely, endeavour to avoid situations where this may arise.
- Engage in games of a physical nature unless as vital elements of drama/art workshops or structured outdoor activities. (In the planning of drama/art workshops and outdoor activities, staff/volunteers should attempt, where possible, to avoid activities which require such physical contact.)
- Engage or allow inappropriate physical contact with, or make sexually suggestive comments to, vulnerable adults.
- Spend time or meet with vulnerable adults outside of services
- Take vulnerable adults in your car or to other locations or premises
- Perform tasks, involving physical contact, for vulnerable adults which they are capable of doing themselves, at all times respecting the dignity of the person.
- Take or publish photographs of participants involved in activities without explicit consent (and also in keeping with policies of partner services and organisations)

Staff/Volunteers must ensure that:

- Any necessary meetings with vulnerable adults should be conducted as openly as possible with the awareness of other staff, volunteers and/or other adults present.
- Should any meetings be deemed to require privacy, doors to the rooms where the meetings are conducted must remain open.

All the above apply whether activities or events are conducted in any premises or venues both indoor and outdoor, as well as during travel to and from any other premises/venues, as part of {NAME} PPN's activities or events.

If you think you may have caused offence, however unintentionally, acknowledge and offer an apology or explanation as soon as possible.

Should you observe or witness any action, behaviour or symptoms that indicate a concern in relation to a child's safety or welfare, report the matter, in the first instance to the service manager and advise her/him of your obligations under this policy. Note the concern and report to the designated liaison person at the first opportunity.

Provided that all {NAME} PPN policies and procedures are adhered to, it is the wish of {NAME} PPN staff and Board members that staff and volunteers encourage vulnerable adults to participate in activities and encourage all participants to develop their own ideas and skills as well, as experience the many other positive outcomes, both personally and socially, acquired by participation in such activities.

This policy fulfils the requirements of the legislation and embraces the principles of best practice in relation to Vulnerable Adult Policies and procedures in the Republic of Ireland.

12 Sample Dignity in the Workplace Policy

Dignity in the Workplace Policy

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to demonstrate {NAME} PPN's commitment to implementing and promoting measures to protect the dignity of PPN Workers and Volunteers and to encourage respect for others at work. This is done by creating a work environment free from discrimination, harassment, racism, sexual harassment, bullying and disrespectful behaviour by dealing effectively with any complaints of such conduct, and also by welcoming diversity and promoting equality.

This policy is to give practical guidance to PPN Workers and volunteers on:

- what is meant by discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and disrespectful behaviour;
- how this unacceptable behaviour may be deterred;
- how to raise the awareness of all involved with {NAME} PPN to the identification of the potential for this form of unacceptable behaviour;
- what steps to take if it does occur to ensure that adequate procedures are readily available to deal with the problem, to ensure that all parties, complainant and respondent, are treated fairly in resolving the problem and to prevent any recurrence.

It is important to note that while {NAME} PPN cannot guarantee confidentiality, it will make every effort to ensure that everyone involved while a complaint of harassment, sexual harassment or bullying is being investigated observes it.

Where it is necessary to interview witnesses as part of an investigation they will be expected to respect the privacy of the parties involved by refraining from discussing the allegations with other work colleagues or persons outside of the organisation.

Nothing in this policy overrules a person's legal and statutory rights.

It is the objective of this policy is to set out {NAME} PPN's policy and procedures in relation to harassment, sexual harassment and bullying and outlines the procedure to be followed if any PPN Worker or Volunteer feels that they have been subjected to harassment.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, customers, suppliers and visitors to the workplace. This policy applies during normal working time in the PPN's premises and also at work related social events, business trips and other work related activities such as training courses or conferences, whether they take place on the PPN's premises or not, and whether or not they take place during normal working hours.

3. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

{NAME} PPN is committed to equal opportunity of employment and all employment policies, procedures and practices will be based on merit, qualifications and abilities. Employment and recruitment practices will not be influenced or affected by an employee's race, colour, religion, sex, marital status, nationality, family status, sexual orientation, disability, age or membership of the Traveller community. Implied in the {NAME} PPN's contracts of employment is a commitment to

equal pay for equal work. Likewise, in selecting service providers, none of the grounds listed above will be used as the basis for any decision.

{NAME} PPN promotes and supports the right to dignity at work. All who work in {NAME} PPN are treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity. {NAME} PPN will not tolerate discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, harassment or disrespectful behaviour by one employee or group of employees against another or others for any reason. Lack of respect may be shown in words, conduct, acts or demeanour. The PPN promotes a workplace culture of dignity, respect and openness to diversity which should be reflected in the actions and behaviour of all employees. Where this occurs it is regarded as contravening the values of the PPN and as such will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as the treatment of a person in a less favourable way than another person is, has or would have been treated, on any of the nine grounds listed below. Discrimination is also taken to have occurred where one of the nine grounds is imputed to a person, or where a person who is associated with another is treated less favourably than another person would have been by virtue of that association.

{NAME} PPN values the contribution of all employees and requires every employee to refrain from any type of behaviour which may be interpreted as offending, harassing or discriminating against another/other employees. While not restricted to the grounds listed below, the policy prevents any form of discrimination based on the following:

- Gender
- Marital status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief or lack of religious belief
- Age (16+)
- Disability or the nature of disability
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins
- Traveller status

Harassment

The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004 expressly prohibits harassment. Harassment is defined as any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds, being conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment may be explicit or implicit; it may be a single incident or occur over a period of time. It may be directed at an individual or at a group. In defining and identifying harassment it is the effect of the behaviour that is relevant not the intent. It is the impact of the behaviour on the person affected that determines whether harassment has occurred.

Such conduct may include spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material, if the action or conduct is unwelcome to the employee and is

deemed to be offensive, humiliating or intimidating. Examples of harassment include the following:

- Verbal Harassment – jokes, comments, ridicule or songs
- Written Harassment – faxes, text messages, emails or notices
- Non-Verbal/Visual Harassment – jostling, shoving or any form of assault; gestures, posturing or threatening poses; visual displays such as posters, emblems or badges; isolation or exclusion from workplace social activities; pressure to behave in a manner that the employee thinks is inappropriate, e.g. being required to dress in a manner unsuited to a person's ethnic or religious background.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is prohibited by the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004. Sexual harassment is defined as conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Such conduct may take the form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This may include acts of physical intimacy, any request for sexual favours, or any other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is unwelcome and regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

Forms of Sexual Harassment

Many forms of behaviour can constitute sexual harassment and a single incident may constitute sexual harassment. The following is a listing of potential forms of sexual harassment, which is not exhaustive:

- Verbal Harassment – unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, or pressure for sexual activity; unwelcome pressure for social contact; sexually suggestive jokes, remarks or innuendoes.
- Physical Harassment – unwelcome physical contact such as groping, pinching, patting, unnecessary touching or brushing against another person's body; indecent exposure; unwelcome fondling or kissing; sexual assault or rape.
- Non-Verbal/Visual Harassment – the display of sexually suggestive or pornographic pictures and calendars, objects, written materials, emails, text messages or faxes; leering, offensive gestures, whistling.

Bullying

All forms of bullying are prohibited. Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but, as a once off incident, is not considered to be bullying.

Forms of Bullying

Bullying occurs in many guises and reveals itself through obvious and direct methods as well as in less direct and subtle forms. Bullying may manifest itself across the organisational and management structure. It can occur within peer groups, from management to PPN Workers and from PPN

Workers to management. Bullying may be categorised in a number of forms including behaviour that may:

- Humiliate: Preventing a colleague from speaking by using aggressive and/or obscene language, sneering or ridicule including horseplay or practical jokes, and criticising their efforts often in front of others;
- Intimidate: physical abuse or threats of abuse, open aggression, threats, staring, shouting abuse or obscenities;
- Verbal abuse: persistent unwarranted criticism;
- Victimise: manipulation of a colleagues reputation by rumour, gossip ridicule and/or innuendo;
- Exclude and isolate: social exclusion and isolation;
- Intrude: through pestering, spying or stalking;
- Manipulate the nature of work by withholding information, setting meaningless tasks, giving repeated unreasonable assignments or duties that are obviously unfavourable to one individual, giving repeated impossible deadlines or impossible tasks, or regularly taking the credit for somebody's work, but never taking the blame when things go wrong;
- Undermine a person's authority.

Lack of Respect

Lack of respect is prohibited by the PPN. It can be shown by direct comments, sarcasm, snide remarks, inappropriate jokes or banter towards a colleague. It can arise where colleagues are ignored, overlooked, avoided or shunned without good reason and in a manner likely to be hurtful or disrespectful. Jokes or comments directed at, or referred to, a colleague could be thought amusing by others but may be unpleasant, uncomfortable or hurtful to that colleague.

Respect should be shown to all colleagues. Respect is also earned. By showing respect to others and honouring their personal dignity, a person will earn their respect.

Intent

It is the effect of the treatment on the harassed or bullied individual, and not the intent of the alleged perpetrator, that will be taken into consideration when determining whether or not the treatment constitutes harassment, sexual harassment or bullying.

4. EFFECTS OF HARASSMENT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Harassment, sexual harassment and bullying exact a high price from employees and employers alike. Employees can be subject to fear, stress and anxiety, which may put great strains on personal and family life. Individuals working in a climate of fear and resentment do not perform to their capabilities. The result is not just poor morale but increased absenteeism, higher labour turnover, reduced productivity, reduced efficiency and divided teams.

5. RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT AND PPN Workers

All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by {NAME} PPN, have a duty and responsibility to uphold the principles of this policy. While each employee has a responsibility to ensure that harassment, sexual harassment and bullying is prevented, line managers have a specific responsibility to promote the provisions of this policy.

6. RIGHTS OF THE PARTIES

This policy guarantees that all complaints will be treated seriously and current nationally agreed PPN procedures for dealing with complaints of Bullying or Harassment/Sexual Harassment will be followed.

An individual is free to make a complaint. He/she will not be victimised for making a complaint. However, if a complaint is found to be false or malicious, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate, up to and including dismissal.

All parties involved will be treated with respect, and counselling may be availed of by either or both parties at any stage in the procedure. The alleged perpetrator of harassment is entitled to representation, a fair and impartial hearing and the right to challenge a claim of harassment. An allegation of harassment remains an allegation until it is found, following investigation, to be harassment.

Where an employee is found to have engaged in harassment, he/she will be subject to the disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action, as appropriate, up to and including dismissal.

Protection against retaliation

Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy and should be reported immediately. Any PPN Worker or Volunteer found to have retaliated against another for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action.

13 Sample Memorandum of Understanding

Between

Local Authority Council Of Address Phone, Email

And

XXX PPN Of Address, Phone, Email

Purpose and Scope

To outline in a clear and unambiguous manner the roles and responsibilities of Local Authority and <XXX> Public Participation Network with regard to the delivery of the PPN Programme as laid down in <DECLG Guidelines>.

An annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) may be required subsequent to an agreement on a detailed annual workplan. This objective of the SLA will be to ensure that work is undertaken in a timely and appropriate manner and fulfils the requirements for PPN

Context

(from Department Guidelines / Task Group report)

A new framework for public engagement and participation, to be called "The Public Participation Network (PPN)" will be developed within each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the Local Authority area level) to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority's areas of responsibility.

The PPN will be the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes.

The aim of the structures and processes is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, not to reduce or homogenise this diversity. A parallel and equally important aim should be to facilitate the local authority in making better and more timely decisions.

Members of the local community interact with local government at different levels. The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government.

The Network is expected to perform its functions following core principles to facilitate active participation with decision making bodies as identified earlier i.e. participation trust, accountability, transparency and independence.

Goals and Objectives

To establish and develop a Public Participation Network in XXX which (extract from guidelines)

- *Facilitates the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies*
- *Strengthens the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate*
- *Provides information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.*

In particular the role of the Network is:

1. *To contribute to the local authority's development for the Local Authority area a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.*
2. *to facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.*
3. *to identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.*
4. *to actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and Local Authority area level and to clearly demonstrate same.*
5. *to encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services.*
6. *to facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors onto city/Local Authority area decision making bodies.*
7. *to support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network*
8. *to work to develop the Environmental, Community and Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the Local Authority area.*
9. *to support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that:*
 - *They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively.*
 - *They can participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities.*
 - *They are included and their voices and concerns are heard.*

Roles and Responsibilities

- XXCC will deliver a Public Participation Network in its operational area. XCC undertakes to provide a minimum of €30K funding to maximise the budget available to PPN.
- XXX PPN will take responsibility for the operational rollout of the PPN in <geographical area>
- XXX PPN will delegate up to three individuals to act on its behalf with regard to the negotiation and progress of this MOU. Any change in these individuals must be communicated in writing to both parties.
- The Director of Services with responsibility for Community or their appointed representative (Minimum Administrative Officer level) will act on behalf of XCC. Any change in this individual must be communicated in writing to both parties.

Workplan and budget

PPN will:

- Devise an annual detailed workplan (See Appendix 1) which will clearly demonstrate how it will achieve the aims and objectives of PPN within that period
- Identify the itemised budget and resource requirements under the workplan
- Have in place a robust financial management system and financial reporting structure
- Have a clear reporting mechanism on key performance indicators and other items related to PPN activity.

XXX CC will:

- Agree the workplan for <period>
- Agree a resource allocation for <period> and a payment schedule based on satisfactory reports
- Appoint a liaison person between the CC and PPN who is at least at Administrative Officer level.

Staffing

PPN and XXXCC will together devise a suitable structure for the employment of the resource worker (see Appendix 2)

PPN Will

- Devise a job description (See Appendix 3) and terms and conditions of employment for the resource worker.
- Participate in the recruitment of the resource worker, where appropriate
- Facilitate the provision of suitable workspace and equipment for the resource worker
- Manage the day to day work of the resource worker in the furtherance of the workplan.
- Offer support, supervision and relevant training and development opportunities to the worker.

Optional depending on the employment model used

- *Act as the employer of the resource worker, taking responsibility for all relevant HR and Health and Safety matters, including having clear processes and procedures.*
- *Undertake to pay the resource worker, deducting all taxes and charges and paying them to Revenue*
- *Have employers liability and other relevant insurances*

XXX CC will

Optional depending on the employment model used

- *Participate in the recruitment of the resource worker*
- *Act as the employer of the resource worker, taking responsibility for all relevant HR and Health and Safety matters, including having clear processes and procedures.*
- *Undertake to pay the resource worker, deducting all taxes and charges and paying them to Revenue*
- *Have employers liability and other relevant insurances*

Operational Co-operation

XX PPN will

- Work constructively and collaboratively with XXCC in the furtherance of the aims of PPN as set out in the guidelines.
- Take out suitable insurance policies as are required for its activities, and those policies will specifically indemnify XX CC.
- Engage in other activities provided they are complementary to this workplan and that they can access the extra resources required to undertake such work.
- Work with XX CC on any funding applications which may be appropriate.

XXX CC will

- Support the development of a wellbeing statement at local and county /city level.
- Approach PPN for representatives for all seats on decision making / advisory bodies under their auspices which require Environmental, Social Inclusion, or Community and Voluntary members.
- Pay expenses to PPN representatives on such structures according to a mechanism to be

agreed with PPN.

- Work with PPN to agree, adopt and implement a protocol for all committees/decision making bodies with PPN representatives that will enable the representatives to engage fully, taking into consideration timing, location, documentation etc.
- Use the PPN as their main way of communicating with the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community and Voluntary Sector, including formal consultations.
- Offer workshops and training as required to PPN members to build their capacity to feed into policies and plans.
- Provide a designated official who will liaise with and support PPN.
- Work with XX PPN on any funding applications which may be appropriate

Reporting and Evaluation

XX PPN will

- Submit quarterly reports to XX CC detailing progress on the workplan in accordance with agreed KPIs
- Submit quarterly financial reports to XXCC.
- Attend a quarterly / bi annual review meeting with XXCC
- Devise, agree and implement a participatory evaluation framework which involves all stakeholders in the PPN process.
- Carry out Annual Reviews and produce an Annual Report on PPN

XX CC will

- Submit reports to DECLG as required to draw down funds.
- Pay over approved funds to PPN in a timely way to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.
- Participate in evaluation and monitoring of its performance.

Conflict resolution

Every effort should be made to avoid serious conflict between the parties, by providing good communication protocols that will enable any issues to be dealt early and in a timely manner.

In the event that any dispute relating to this MOU cannot be resolved by settlement between the parties, the parties shall attempt to resolve all disputes through informal means. This may include mediation, arbitration, or any other procedures upon which the parties agree. In the first instance, such mediation should involve the Director of Services, and the PPN designated person within the Department.

Review

This MOU will be reviewed in writing every year on the anniversary of its signing. Any recommended changes must be agreed by both parties.

Commencement

This agreement will come into force on dd/mm/yy and be effective until dd/mm/yy

Signed

On Behalf of XXCC

On Behalf of PPN

Ratified by PPN Plenary on/...../.....

Appendix 1 – Draft Workplan

Action	KPIs / Targets to be developed (LA in red)
Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and community and voluntary sectors on decision making bodies	
Nomination and election of representatives to committees/boards	Number of requests for representatives from LA and other relevant bodies, No of elections, No of reps, Participation in elections, No of committees with PPN reps etc.
Establishment and maintenance of linkage groups as effective feedback and feed in mechanisms between reps and the groups they serve	No of linkage groups, No of meetings, attendance at meetings, evidence of communication and engagement
Support / training of representatives	Development and agreement of reps charter, No. of training events
Effective representation	Attendance of reps at meetings, participation in sub-groups, participation in linkage groups etc. Evidence of participation by reps at meetings, impact of community reps in LA policies and decision making
Participation in county / city consultations	No of invitations from LA and other relevant bodies to PPN for consultation. No of consultations participated in by PPN, Formal PPN inputs made. Inclusion of PPN inputs in policy.
Facilitation of / Participation in local area / sector consultations / plans	No of invitations from LA and other relevant bodies to PPN for local consultation. No of local consultations facilitated and contributed to. Inclusion of PPN inputs in policy.
Establish Municipal District PPNs and interaction with the Local Authority at that level	No of meetings held, interaction with LA
Active promotion of the voices of those who are traditionally excluded including the development of Thematic Networks ⁴	No of traditionally excluded groups in PPN, Participation in Linkage groups etc. No. of Thematic Networks established, Meetings and activity of Thematic Networks. No. of reps of Travellers, Roma, ex-prisoners, migrants and other disadvantaged groups nominated to SPC's/LCDC's
Networking with Local Authority and other statutory bodies to develop PPN as the reference point for the community and voluntary sector in the county/city	No of requests to PPN for information / reps etc. Evidence of interactions between all sections of LA and PPN, Evidence of interaction between other statutory bodies and PPN.
Facilitate the development of a well-being statement at county/city and MD level.	Documentation of process, existence of statement

4 A Thematic network deals with a particular section or group e.g. Young People, People with a disability, Older People etc.

Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside / participate

Action	KPIs / Targets to be developed
Establishing training needs within the local area	Training needs report
Working to meet those identified needs via formal or informal training.	No of programmes offered, uptake, outcomes
Networking and collaborating with other agencies to support capacity building e.g. Volunteer Centres, Development Companies, ETB etc.	No and type of organisations, level of interaction, outputs
Focussing on involving groups who are distant from the decision making process	Outreach to specific areas / sectors, engagement of those sectors
Focussing on the needs of groups who are distant from the decision making process. Including the development and support of Thematic Networks	No of programmes offered focussed on these groups, uptake, outcomes. Supports provided to thematic networks, outcomes.
Promote networking and mentoring between groups to share best practice. Including the development and support of Activity ⁵ networks	No of events held, no of attendees, no receiving publications etc. Supports provided to Activity networks, outcomes.

Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received

Action	KPIs / Targets to be developed
Establish PPN as the recognised way of sharing information with the sector, and between member groups	No of contributors of information
Develop clear communication materials which will facilitate understanding of PPN and its role	Materials
Newsletters	No and content of newsletters, distribution
Website	Website hits, interactions
Social Media	Friends and interaction etc.
Telephone / email / face to face communications	Query register
Traditional media / papers / local radio etc.	Record of coverage obtained

5 An Activity network deal with a particular activity e.g. Tidy Towns, Local Heritage, Sport, Social Enterprise etc.

Other activities in support of the above aims		
Action		KPIs / Targets to be developed
Establish and implement policies and practices to enable the PPN to operate effectively, including financial, staff and other resource management		Existence of written policies and procedures. Evidence of implementation
Recruitment, employment and management of full time equivalent resource worker		Worker in place. Relevant management structures in place and implemented
Secure suitable office space and equipment for the PPN		Suitable space sourced and PPN address established
Promote the PPN and its work to member groups and the wider community and stakeholders		Awareness of PPN, evidence of promotional activity
Manage and maintain an active register of groups		No of member groups, existence of up to date register, protocols for updating, data protection policy implemented.
Hold regular Secretariat meetings (min 4 per year)		No of meetings, attendance, outcomes
Hold regular Plenary Meetings (min 2 per year)		No of meetings, attendance, outcomes
Hold regular Municipal District (or other area based) meetings (min 2 per MD per year)		No of meetings, attendance, outcomes
Demonstrate Plenary as the decision making body of PPN		Proposals brought to PPN, Approval of nominees by Plenary, Approval of other proposals by Plenary
Monitoring and evaluation of the plan		Evaluation framework, results of evaluation, Annual Report,

Appendix 2 Possible structures for employment of resource worker

According to the guidelines one of the roles of the Secretariat is to “Manage the resource worker who will be provided to PPN at a county level to enable them in delivering their objectives.”

This offers a particular challenge in terms of enabling a structure which

- Offers direct line management of the worker by PPN. It is essential to avoid a position where a worker is conflicted between their responsibilities to the organisation that pays them and is their legal employer and the PPN Secretariat managing them.
- Can operate to good HR practices including clear pathways for reporting, responsibilities and conflict resolution
- Minimises risk to Secretariat members / PPN in case of liabilities.
- Plans for long term issues such as staff security and entitlements, liabilities etc.
- Incorporates TUPE concerns where relevant

Under all circumstances

- PPN will have to create a mechanism whereby the worker reports to a single individual, who may be backed up by a small staff sub-group. Any structures created should also be able to accommodate the employment of ancillary workers e.g. CE, Job Bridge, Tús, student placements etc.
- a suitably equipped office location will have to be found for the worker. Arrangements here will differ across the country depending on the local situation, and may include remote working.
- it should be open to the PPN in each county to decide on the best way to provide full time equivalent staffing i.e. one full-time worker, two part-time etc.
- the worker will be required to do a significant amount of evening and weekend work.

A range of options are open to the Local Authority –

- PPN is the employer
- Local Authority is the employer
 - Existing Staff member
 - New recruit to Local Authority
- “Host” organisation employs worker
- Worker is retained on contract for service basis

PPN is the employer

The PPN takes out relevant insurances and recruits and employs the worker, provides their workspace, taking responsibility for all HR, payment and management. Key issues

Positives	Negatives	Logistics
Independence: Worker is recruited by PPN	Potential of liability for PPN Secretariat, in the event of funding reducing etc. – redundancy	LA pays grant over to PPN
Independence: Worker reports directly to PPN	Admin burden on Secretariat	
Flexibility re remuneration package and work arrangements	Lack of security and career structure for worker.	
Independence: PPN clearly perceived as separate from LA		

Local Authority is the employer

Existing Staff member

In a number of local authorities, an existing staff member has already been allocated to PPN. This staff member (usually in Community and Enterprise) has a line manager within the LA.

Positives	Negatives	Logistics
Strong HR / admin framework within LA	Lack of independence: PPN likely to be seen as part of LA	Requires a very strong MOU
Security of tenure, and career structure for worker	Lack of Independence: Potential for worker to be pulled away to other LA business / be redeployed / conflict of interest	
Low risk for PPN / Secretariat	Lack of Independence: PPN may have no control over what worker is assigned to them	
	Potential difficulties for worker if PPN opposing LA on policies etc.	
	Potential lack of flexibility re remuneration and work arrangements	
	How does PPN “manage” the worker when their core employment is with LA?	
	PPN budget could be “absorbed” into general LA structure covering a currently existing salary, and lack transparency	

New recruit to Local Authority

PPN and LA recruit a new worker on a temporary (renewable) contract. The LA takes on the payment and HR functions, and assigns the worker completely to PPN under an SLA/MOU. Some aspects of the Sports Partnerships model may be relevant here.

Positives	Negatives	Logistics
Independence: PPN involved in recruitment	Potential for conflict between LA and PPN re role of worker	Requires a strong MOU and reporting mechanism
Independence: Seen as somewhat independent from LA	Potential difficulties for worker if PPN opposing LA on policies etc.	Is "non-salary" budget paid over to PPN for use on programmes etc.
Strong HR/admin framework within LA	Possible issues with staff complement and recruitment embargo – non replacement re sick leave, maternity leave etc.	
Flexibility re remuneration package and work arrangements	How does PPN "manage" the worker when their core employment is with LA?	
Security and career structure for worker		

"Host" organisation employs worker

An external organisation to the LA and PPN agrees to host the worker.

Positives	Negatives	Logistics
Independence: PPN involved in recruitment	Confusion for worker in terms of line management	Requires a strong MOU and reporting mechanism
Independence: Seen as independent from LA	Conflict between host and PPN re role of worker	Is total budget paid over to host? What about programme costs etc?
Flexibility re remuneration package and work arrangements	Potential difficulties for worker if PPN opposing host on policies etc.	Dependent on HR framework in host
Lack of security and career structure for worker	Risk of host organisation being seen to dominate PPN	
	Lack of independence: Identification of PPN with host organisation	
	Risk for host organisation if funding reduced – redundancy.	

Worker is retained on contract for service

The tasks to be done are tendered for (e-tenders), and a contract for service entered into with the successful tenderer for a fixed term period. The contractee is then self-employed and takes responsibility for their own tax, hours and place of work etc. To meet the Revenue guidelines <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/rct/determining-the-correct-employment-status-of-a-worker.html>, the person must not work exclusively for one organisation, must provide their own materials etc.

Positives	Negatives	Logistics
Independence: PPN involved in recruitment	Short term contract only – contract would have to be readvertised regularly. Continuity not possible.	Requires a strong MOU and reporting mechanism.
Independence: Seen as independent from LA	Difficult to meet Revenue Commissioners' restrictions on who can be "self-employed".	May offer a short term solution for 6 months while Secretariat gets organised.
Independence: Direct Line Management by PPN	No security for contractee or PPN. No career structure	
Flexibility re remuneration package and work arrangements	Difficult to change duties to meet changing circumstances.	
No Employers PRSI to be paid.	Potential conflict of interest for contractee with other work they may be tendering for	
No employer liability		

Appendix 3(a): Draft job Description for resource worker

Job Title: PPN Resource Worker

Reporting to: PPN Secretariat via their designated structure (to be determined)

Purpose: To support the work of the Secretariat to develop the PPN in <area> as an effective structure to promote public engagement and participation via the environmental, social inclusion and community and voluntary sectors in accordance with the relevant guidelines.

The Resource Worker will be a strongly motivated person, with a strong sense of commitment to the ideas and values inherent in the work of PPN.

Key Objectives

- Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors on decision making bodies
- Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside / participate
- Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received

Key duties

- Support the Secretariat to develop an integrated workplan to meet these objectives.
- To support the Secretariat by organising and attending meetings, providing reports and any other reasonable tasks as directed. .
- Networking and collaborating with the Local Authority and other statutory bodies to develop PPN as the reference point for the environmental, community and voluntary and social inclusion sectors in the county/city and to further the aims of PPN
- Co-ordinate the nominating and election process for representatives onto Boards and Committees including liaison with the requesting body.
- Support elected PPN representatives in their work, and in particular facilitating effective feedback between them and their linkage group and the wider PPN community, leading to the full diversity of views being reflected.
- Co-ordinate and prepare submissions from PPN to public consultations as directed, working with member groups to participate in consultations and planning that affects them.
- Facilitate the development and monitoring of a well-being statement at county/city and MD level.
- Develop and manage the PPN database as an active and accurate register of member groups, including data protection policies.
- Promote PPN membership and encourage participation by all groups, especially those traditionally excluded.
- Facilitate the involvement of all sectoral interests in PPN, including establishing thematic networks and supporting them as appropriate. Such thematic networks could focus on areas such as Youth, Disability, Women, Older people etc.
- Co-ordinate and facilitate PPN events including meetings of the Plenary, Municipal Districts,

Linkage Groups and other such structures as may be required.

- Establish capacity building needs for member groups and work to meet those identified needs via delivering formal or informal training and networking. This is likely to include collaborating with other agencies/entities e.g. Volunteer Centres, LCDC, local Development Companies, ETB etc.
- Develop and implement a communications strategy for PPN to include personal contact and traditional and social media –
 - Research, produce and distribute a regular newsletter for members
 - Manage the PPN website ensuring it is up to date.
 - Promote the PPN and its work to member groups and the wider community and stakeholders
 - Devising materials to be used for PPN responses to requests including online consultations, public meetings, workshops, surveys etc.
- Identify, source and manage the resources necessary (human, financial and material) to implement the workplan
- Manage the day to day workings of the PPN, including administration, financial accounts and expenses payments.
- To devise systems and keep accurate and methodical records for all internal processes and procedures.
- Complete all relevant funding applications and reports as required for the Local Authority, including financial accounts.
- Sourcing supplementary funding from other sources, and accounting for such funds, and managing any projects arising from such funding.
- To develop and implement an evaluation framework for the PPN to support its strategic development and continuous improvement.
- Any other reasonable duties which may be requested in furtherance of these aims.

Requirements

- 3rd level qualification or substantial work experience in relevant area.
- A minimum of 3 years community development experience, or experience working with the “not for profit” sector.
- Knowledge and understanding of public participation and in particular the barriers to participation of socially excluded groups.
- Knowledge and understanding of public policy development and relevant structures at Local Authority level.
- Knowledge and experience of the community and voluntary, environmental and/or social inclusion sectors.
- Project management experience & ability to manage multiple projects at once.
- Experience of building, managing and nurturing partnerships and relationships across a wide range of key stakeholders.
- Strong analytic, report writing, strategic, organisational, governance, financial skills.
- Excellent facilitation skills.
- Effective communication skills.
- Leadership and people management skills in a paid or voluntary capacity.

- Excellent IT & administration skills, including MS Word, Excel & Power Point, social networking, website maintenance etc.
- Experience of working with a Voluntary Board of Management.
- Full clean driving licence & access to own transport for service delivery.
- Evening and weekend work will be required for this role.
- Garda vetting is essential.

Appendix 3(b) Draft job Description for Support Worker

Job Title: PPN Support Worker

Key duties

The key duty of the PPN Support Worker is to support the PPN Resource Worker/Co-ordinator in their functions in developing the PPN as an effective structure to promote public engagement and participation via the environmental, social inclusion and community and voluntary sectors in accordance with relevant Department of Rural and Community Development Circulars and PPN User Handbook.

While not exhaustive, the PPN Support Worker will be required to:

- Organise and attend meetings, provide reports and any other reasonable tasks as directed.
- Network and engage with the Local Authority and other statutory and relevant bodies to develop the PPN as the reference point for the environmental, community and voluntary and social inclusion sectors in the county/city and to further the aims of PPN
- Maintain the Salesforce database as an active and accurate register of member groups
- Implement a communications strategy to include
 - Input into research, production and distribution of a regular newsletter for members
 - Managing the PPN website ensuring it is up to date.
 - Promoting the PPN and its work to member groups and the wider community and stakeholders
 - Devising materials to be used for PPN responses to requests including online consultations, public meetings, workshops, surveys etc.
 - Operating social media accounts
- Operate the day to day workings of the PPN, including administration, financial accounts and expenses payments.
- Any other work which may be assigned by the Resource Worker/Co-Ordinator on the day to day operation of the PPN, including administration, financial reporting etc.

Requirements

- Knowledge & understanding of the public participation network
- Experience of working with community & voluntary organisations & voluntary committees
- Excellent communication skills including fluency in written & spoken English
- Ability to work on evenings and/or weekends if necessary
- Ability to work as part of a team

14 Sample Re-Registration Protocol

Why re-register?

We would like to stay in touch with you and hope that you will continue your membership of {NAME} PPN.

Membership and contact information will change over time. All PPNs are requested to re-register groups every two years and ensure the accuracy of membership records in accordance with good governance.

What is the process for re-registration?

We will be making contact with the primary contact for each group registered with {NAME} PPN before {DATE}.

Emails will be sent during the week commencing {DATE}. The email will contain links to an online form.

The online form will show the current information on your group and corrections can be recorded on this form.

The primary contact will also choose from the following options:

- I am the primary contact and I confirm re-registration – re-registration process completed
- I am not the primary contact and cannot confirm re-registration– you will then be asked to confirm you have permission to give new contact details. If not, we will follow up by phone.
- I am the primary contact and I confirm that the organisation no longer wishes to be a PPN Member –Your group will be removed from the {NAME} PPN database.

Groups are encouraged to change the contact email from a private one to a general group email account if available.

The strength of the PPN relies on the depth and diversity of its membership across community and voluntary groups in {area}. We hope that groups will re-confirm their engagement with the PPN and help to fulfill its potential for {area}.

15 Sample Service Level Agreements

(i) Local Authority and Hosting Organisation

This agreement is made on _____ day of _____ 2019

Between

(1) HOST ORGANISATION incorporated and registered in Ireland with company number NUMBER whose registered office is at ADDRESS (hereinafter referred to as HOST ORGANISATION)

(2) LOCAL AUTHORITY, whose principal office is at ADDRESS (hereinafter referred to as LOCAL AUTHORITY).

BACKGROUND

- (a) HOST ORGANISATION is a multi-funded community development organisation providing social projects and services in the AREA.
- (b) OTHER RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- (c) It has now been agreed, that a Service Level Agreement is to be drawn up between the parties above to give effect to the funding and service delivery arrangements of LOCAL AUTHORITY's funding for the NAME Public Participation Network in 2019.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This agreement is intended to set out the terms and conditions on which LOCAL AUTHORITY will provide grant funding to HOST ORGANISATION for the purpose described above.
- 1.2 If HOST ORGANISATION and LOCAL AUTHORITY fail to meet these terms and conditions, the dispute mechanism outlined below will come into play.
- 1.3 HOST ORGANISATION and LOCAL AUTHORITY are expected to adhere to good corporate governance practice.

IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

2. DURATION

- 2.1 This agreement will commence on the date that it is made and shall continue in force until the 31st day of December 2019.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 This Service Level Agreement (SLA) between LOCAL AUTHORITY and HOST ORGANISATION is being set up to provide the requisite services to year end 2019.

These services include the provision of a Resource Worker and a Support Worker who will;

- (i) Provide 35 hours/week and 28 hours/week respectively of support and development work to the PPN
- (ii) Prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate the PPN work plan
- (iii) Work towards an effective, efficient and representative Network which will give a

voice to local communities and groups, and in turn will provide feedback to local organisations and agencies on consultative matters where required

- (iv) Greatly increase membership across all Municipal Districts
- (v) Provide members with induction and capacity-building training
- (vi) Develop linkage groups, thematic and local networks
- (vii) Support the development of good governance structures and practice within member organisations
- (viii) Fulfill all the requirements outlined in the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) A User Guide, March 2017
- (ix) Carry out all responsibilities as outlined in the respective job descriptions contained in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 of this SLA.

3.2 HOST ORGANISATION shall implement the agreed submitted NAME PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker work-plans in accordance with the terms of this contract.

3.3 The work-plans may be amended by agreement between the HOST ORGANISATION and LOCAL AUTHORITY.

4. LEGAL STATUS AND STRUCTURE

4.1 Neither party involved in this SLA shall have authority or power to bind, to contract in name of, or create a liability for, the other party in any way or for any purpose. For the avoidance of doubt, it is expressly declared and confirmed that it is not the purpose or intention of the agreement to create, nor shall the same be construed as creating any commercial or other partnership or fiduciary relationship between LOCAL AUTHORITY and HOST ORGANISATION.

4.2 For the purposes of this Agreement, HOST ORGANISATION shall at all times be considered to be an independent contractor and the relationship of principal and agent shall not exist between LOCAL AUTHORITY and HOST ORGANISATION in the context of the Agreement.

5. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

5.1 HOST ORGANISATION shall cooperate with LOCAL AUTHORITY in carrying out its responsibilities in monitoring and evaluating the work of the NAME PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker. In this regard, a supervisory working group comprised of a representative from HOST ORGANISATION, LOCAL AUTHORITY and the PPN Secretariat will meet quarterly to ensure that the PPN work plan is being fulfilled satisfactorily.

5.2 HOST ORGANISATION will provide any information as may be reasonably requested by LOCAL AUTHORITY from time to time.

5.3 HOST ORGANISATION in conjunction with LOCAL AUTHORITY shall ensure that proper evaluation procedures are in place in respect of the work-plan and the management committee hereby undertakes to implement any recommendations of LOCAL AUTHORITY in respect of such procedures.

5.4 The results of evaluations shall be incorporated into annual progress reports relating to the work of NAME PPN.

5.5 HOST ORGANISATION and LOCAL AUTHORITY will comply with all applicable laws, guidelines and circulars in relation to the operational matters pertaining to PPN's nationally.

- 5.6 HOST ORGANISATION undertakes to have sufficient insurance and coverage in respect of all services and activities it delivers in the use of the PPN grant.
- 5.7 HOST ORGANISATION will act as the support agency for the PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker at the behest of LOCAL AUTHORITY subject to the terms and conditions as provided herein and LOCAL AUTHORITY, pursuant to this agreement has agreed to fund the posts of the Resource Worker and Support Worker and the sundry expenses pertaining to the PPN as eligible under the PPN budget 2019 in order to ensure a continuation of services by the PPN subject to the terms and conditions herein.

6. FINANCIAL PROCEDURES WILL INCLUDE

- 6.1 Subject to the terms and conditions set out in this Agreement, LOCAL AUTHORITY shall provide the required matching funding in order to successfully apply for the full Department of Rural and Community Development PPN Grant
- 6.2 HOST ORGANISATION must use the Grant only for the purpose set out in the agreed submitted PPN work-plan. All monies paid to the HOST ORGANISATION on foot of this agreement shall be lodged to a nominated account used solely for the purpose of resourcing the work of the PPN, including staffing costs-. All transactions in respect of monies paid by LOCAL AUTHORITY for this worker and work-plan whether receipts or payments in respect of the proposal shall be made through that account.
- 6.3 Funds will be made available to the HOST ORGANISATION by LOCAL AUTHORITY over the period of this agreement subject to the resources made available to LOCAL AUTHORITY.
- 6.4 Drawdown to be processed on foot of requisition between 5 to 7 working days subject to the normal terms and conditions for drawdown.
- 6.5 Funding will be made available to the HOST ORGANISATION for the periods of this agreement provided always that:
 - (a) LOCAL AUTHORITY shall be under no obligation to fund sums in excess of the limit specified in this agreement or such increased limit otherwise notified to the HOST ORGANISATION from time to time.
 - (b) LOCAL AUTHORITY shall be satisfied with the progress made by the NAME PPN on the basis of the agreed work-plan and progress reports hereinafter provided for: and
 - (c) Periodic financial returns, periodic projections and annual audited accounts of HOST ORGANISATION's PPN nominated account have been submitted to LOCAL AUTHORITY.

7 EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

- 7.1 HOST ORGANISATION is responsible for the employment of the PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker at HOST ORGANISATION and will comply with its statutory employment obligations including obtaining any necessary Garda vetting.
- 7.2 HOST ORGANISATION is responsible for ensuring the PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker fulfils all aspects of their position's Job Description (see Appendix 4 and Appendix 5).
- 7.3 LOCAL AUTHORITY shall not be, nor deemed to be, an employer, within the meaning of the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2015, by virtue of the provision of funding to a person or persons under the Grant.
- 7.4 Nothing in this contract shall create, or be deemed to create, a partnership or joint venture or

establish a relationship of principal and agent or employer and employee between the parties or between one party and the employees of the other party.

- 7.5 The funding being allocated is conditional on the duration of any employment contracts and the conditions under which they are prolonged, not being likely to result in any claim for tenure beyond the period stated in the contract or for permanent status.
- 7.6 For the avoidance of doubt, HOST ORGANISATION shall be solely responsible for any and all remuneration (including any pension arrangements) and making all statutory deductions in respect of its remuneration of employees or staff and remitting such deduction in a timely manner to relevant authorities.

8 BOOKS AND RECORDS

- 8.1 HOST ORGANISATION shall maintain complete and accurate books and records of all receipts and payments in respect of the use of funding and shall retain all supporting documentation. Minutes shall be kept of all meetings affecting the work-plan.

9 ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

- 9.1 Financial returns for the proposal in respect of each three-month period shall be submitted to LOCAL AUTHORITY two weeks after the end of each period.
- 9.2 HOST ORGANISATION undertakes with LOCAL AUTHORITY to keep proper accounts, receipts, and detailed records of any funding made available to it by LOCAL AUTHORITY in respect of the PPN and to furnish to LOCAL AUTHORITY all information relating to the financing of the PPN.
- 9.3 A certified account duly signed by the HOST ORGANISATION auditors shall be submitted to LOCAL AUTHORITY not later than three months from the end of each financial year and shall be in respect of payments made in that financial year. The accounts shall include a statement by the auditors to the effect that s/he has examined the HOST ORGANISATION's accounts and can certify that the grant was spent for the purposes set out in the work-plan appended to this agreement. The accounts shall also include a statement of expenditure under the Grant.

10 INSPECTION

- 10.1 HOST ORGANISATION shall, upon request by LOCAL AUTHORITY, made in writing and giving reasonable notice, permit representatives and agents of LOCAL AUTHORITY to attend at the premises of the HOST ORGANISATION and insofar as they relate to the work of the NAME PPN work-plan, have access to all (or such part or parts as are of relevance) of the books and records of the work of the PPN and to all activities and personnel relating to the PPN at HOST ORGANISATION, provided, however, that the confidentiality attaching to the relationship and communication between clients of the HOST ORGANISATION and staff of the HOST ORGANISATION will at all times be respected and LOCAL AUTHORITY shall not interfere with such confidentiality.

11 ASSETS:

- 11.1 Assets purchased by the HOST ORGANISATION will not be eligible for PPN funding unless written consent is received in advance from LOCAL AUTHORITY.
- 11.2 HOST ORGANISATION shall ensure that all assets purchased from funds under PPN funding,

will be maintained in good order, repair and condition.

- 11.3 No assets purchased from funds under PPN funding, shall be hired out, pledged, mortgaged or charged for a financial gain without the prior written approval from LOCAL AUTHORITY.
- 11.4 Where HOST ORGANISATION ceases to operate or upon termination of this Agreement for any reason, HOST ORGANISATION shall transfer all unused funds under PPN funding in its possession and assets in its possession which were purchased from funds under PPN funding, during the period of the agreement to LOCAL AUTHORITY.

12 INDEMNIFICATION AND INSURANCES

- 12.1 Notwithstanding anything, herein contained LOCAL AUTHORITY shall not be liable for any claim howsoever arising as a result of the negligence, breach of duty, breach of statutory duty or breach of contract on the part of HOST ORGANISATION, its agents, licenses or invitees in its operation of this agreement.
- 12.2 The HOST ORGANISATION will indemnify and hold harmless LOCAL AUTHORITY, its servants and agents against claims, expenses, actions and proceedings arising out of or connected with this agreement.
- 12.3 The HOST ORGANISATION shall effect such public liability and employers liability insurances as may be necessary to better secure the aforementioned indemnities in respect of employment of persons, the supply of services and any other matter arising out of the operation of the agreement or the training or employment of persons in respect of whom grants are paid or payable under this agreement. The HOST ORGANISATION shall produce such policies of insurance and receipt or receipts for current premiums on request of LOCAL AUTHORITY.

13 REPAYMENT OF GRANT

- 13.1 The funds to be made available for this work pursuant to the agreement are made available by way of grant, provided always that in the event of this agreement being terminated by LOCAL AUTHORITY pursuant to clause 14 thereof the said funds which are unspent or were not spent on the PPN project shall immediately become repayable by HOST ORGANISATION to LOCAL AUTHORITY but without interest charges or other expenses.

14. TERMINATION

- 14.1 This agreement can be terminated by LOCAL AUTHORITY on notice to HOST ORGANISATION in the event of any of the following:
 - (a) If in the opinion of LOCAL AUTHORITY, the HOST ORGANISATION is in breach of any of the terms of this Agreement and such breach cannot be remedied within a reasonable period to LOCAL AUTHORITY's satisfaction, the Agreement can be terminated by LOCAL AUTHORITY within 21 days of service of an appropriate notice by LOCAL AUTHORITY of the occurrence of such a breach unless agreed between LOCAL AUTHORITY and the HOST ORGANISATION.
 - (b) If HOST ORGANISATION fails to operate in accordance with the terms and conditions of the PPN work-plan.
- 14.2 This agreement will terminate automatically on the occurrence of any of the following:

- (a) If HOST ORGANISATION shall cease to function.
- (b) If an order is made or a resolution is passed for winding up of the HOST ORGANISATION.
- (c) If a receiver should be appointed over any asset of the HOST ORGANISATION's or if distress or execution shall be levied against any asset of the HOST ORGANISATION's or if a judgement against the HOST ORGANISATION's shall remain satisfied for a period of 21 days following of demand on foot thereof.

14.3 The HOST ORGANISATION may terminate this agreement at any time upon giving LOCAL AUTHORITY 30 days' notice in writing specifying the reasons for such termination.

15 NO FURTHER OBLIGATION

15.1 In the event of termination of this agreement pursuant to clause 14 thereof LOCAL AUTHORITY shall thereupon be relieved of any further obligation to provide funds to the HOST ORGANISATION and the provision of the clause (13) – Repayment of Grant – and Clause (11) – Assets – shall apply.

16. REPORTS

16.2 A final report detailing the work carried out by the PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker in respect of the work-plan shall be submitted to LOCAL AUTHORITY not later than two weeks from the expiry of this agreement.

17. COPYRIGHT

17.1 Copyright in any documents or other materials furnished by LOCAL AUTHORITY to HOST ORGANISATION and by the HOST ORGANISATION to LOCAL AUTHORITY shall remain in the ownership of such copyright. Regarding documents mentioned in Clause 16, the copyright remains the property of the HOST ORGANISATION but the HOST ORGANISATION hereby consents to LOCAL AUTHORITY's reproduction and /or publication of the same and/or extracts there from.

17.2 The annual report may be published two months after submission to LOCAL AUTHORITY or sooner if HOST ORGANISATION agrees.

17.3 The PPN is funded by LOCAL AUTHORITY under its budget for 2019. All publicity material shall display the LOCAL AUTHORITY logo and shall include such disclaimer of liability as LOCAL AUTHORITY or its representative may require to be inserted therein. Copies of the Logo and Guidelines for its use (colour text) can sourced directly from LOCAL AUTHORITY.

18. WAIVER

18.1 A waiver by any party or any breach by the other party hereto of any term of this Agreement shall not constitute a general waiver or such term or of any subsequent breach thereof.

19. NOTICES

19.1 Notice to be given by a party hereunder shall be given in writing and delivered to or sent by ordinary prepaid post to the registered office of that party for the time being and in any other case to its last known address or registered office. Such notice shall be deemed to have been received at the time at which it is actually delivered by hand or 48 hours after posting,

whether received within that period or otherwise.

20. CORRESPONDENCE

- 20.1 Correspondence between LOCAL AUTHORITY and HOST ORGANISATION may be in paper or in electronic format (except that the annual report and audited accounts must be submitted in paper format or both). HOST ORGANISATION and LOCAL AUTHORITY shall provide relevant email addresses and contact telephone numbers for relevant personnel for delivery of the PPN work at HOST ORGANISATION.

21. RETENTION OF RECORDS

- 21.1 Subject to the Data Protection Acts 2018, save in respect of personal data, all reports, records, accounts and other documentation of the Grantee relating to the PPN Programme and/or the use by the Grantee of the grant monies shall be maintained on request for the minimum period for which the Grantee agrees to operate the service or for 7 years from the date of this Agreement whichever is the longer. In no circumstances should any of the financial documentation be destroyed or otherwise disposed of without the prior consent of the Grantor.

22. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

- 22.1 Information provided by the Grantor may be disclosed in response to a request under Freedom of Information Acts 2014 (the “Acts”). The grantee shall if requested give to the Grantor any record relating to any action or service provided under the Grant agreement. Should the Grantee consider that any information to be supplied is commercially sensitive, confidential or of a personal nature, the Grantee must at the time of supplying the information identify such information and specify the reasons for its sensitivity.

23. DISPUTE PROCEDURES

- 23.1 Every effort should be made to avoid serious conflict between the parties, by providing good communication protocols that will enable any issues to be dealt with early and in a timely manner.
- In the event that any dispute relating to this SLA cannot be resolved by settlement between the parties, the parties shall attempt to resolve all disputes through informal means. Dispute resolution may include mediation, arbitration, or any other procedures upon which the parties agree.
- 23.2 Any issues arising for HOST ORGANISATION in respect of the Grant should be discussed firstly with LOCAL AUTHORITY’s nominated officer

The Officer nominated by LOCAL AUTHORITY to deal with the Grant is

Name

Phone Number

Mobile Number

Email address

The Officer nominated by HOST ORGANISATION to deal with the Grant is

Name

Phone Number

Mobile Number

Email address

- 23.3 Any matters which are not resolved at this level should be the subject of a formal written letter to the relevant Chairperson or Chief Executive.
- 23.4 Both parties will agree to give reasonable opportunity to respond to any concerns raised by dispute or review and will endeavour to reach an agreed approach in respect of any review and the necessary actions arising.
- 23.5 However, should agreement not be possible, both parties will agree to refer to an agreed 3rd party for resolution.

24 FUNDING APPLICATIONS

- 24.1 HOST ORGANISATION may develop and submit application for funding locally and nationally for NAME PPN other than LOCAL AUTHORITY funding.

25. CONFIRMATION AND EXECUTION

I confirm that I am authorised to sign this agreement on behalf of HOST ORGANISATION and understand that by signing this agreement I am committing HOST ORGANISATION to complying with these terms and conditions.

I accept and agree on behalf of HOST ORGANISATION to the conditions in this Agreement and affirm that HOST ORGANISATION is duly authorised to enter into and perform this Agreement.

This agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of Ireland and the parties hereto expressly and irrevocably submit to the jurisdiction of the Irish courts.

Signed on Behalf of HOST ORGANISATION

DATE

I confirm that I am authorised to sign this agreement on behalf of LOCAL AUTHORITY and understand that by signing this agreement I am committing LOCAL AUTHORITY to complying with these terms and conditions.

I accept and agree on behalf of LOCAL AUTHORITY to the conditions in this Agreement and affirm that LOCAL AUTHORITY is duly authorised to enter into and perform this Agreement.

This agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of Ireland and the parties hereto expressly and irrevocably submit to the jurisdiction of the Irish courts.

Signed on Behalf of LOCAL AUTHORITY

DATE

- Appendix 1 NAME Public Participation Network Work plan 2019
- Appendix 2 NAME Public Participation Network Budget 2019
- Appendix 3 NAME Public Participation Organisational Structure
- Appendix 4 NAME Public Participation Network Resource Worker Job Description
- Appendix 5 NAME Public Participation Network Support Worker Job Description

(ii) Local Authority and PPN

Purpose and function of the Agreement

The purpose of the Agreement is to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders and the methods of interagency cooperation.

Key stakeholders

This Agreement is made between LOCAL AUTHORITY and NAME Public Participation Network in respect of the Public Participation Network.

Preamble

LOCAL AUTHORITY and NAME PPN enter into this Agreement for the provision of certain services by NAME PPN as identified in the Strategic Plan and Annual Programme of Work (copy appended). This agreement covers the period from 01/01/2019 to 31/12/2019.

Programme of Work

NAME PPN agrees to provide the services outlined in the Strategic Plan and Annual Programme of Work, subject to the envisaged resources being available. LOCAL AUTHORITY agrees to support the implementation of these.

Funding

The overall budget for NAME PPN for 2019 is AMOUNT composed of AMOUNT from DCRD and AMOUNT from LOCAL AUTHORITY.

The activities from the agreed Strategic Plan and Programme of Work will be funded directly from this budget and administered by NAME PPN. A detailed budget including a Projected Cashflow Statement is attached to this document.

Payments

The PPN costs are to be paid directly from LOCAL AUTHORITY using their procedure which is as follows: SET OUT PROCEDURE

Staffing

1. 1 35 hour per week co-ordinator Employed by LOCAL AUTHORITY, managed by NAME PPN Secretariat and housed in LOCAL AUTHORITY Offices. To be reviewed within 6 months.
2. 1 part-time 15 hour per week worker, managed by NAME PPN Secretariat and housed in LOCAL AUTHORITY Offices.
3. 1 37 hour per week (5 day) support worker. Employed by LOCAL AUTHORITY, managed by co-ordinator and NAME PPN Secretariat and housed in LOCAL AUTHORITY Offices.

Communication

Communication link between NAME PPN and LOCAL AUTHORITY is between the NAME PPN Council Liaison Sub-Group and not the Resource Worker.

Location and Equipment

Housed in LOCAL AUTHORITY, however, yearly costs associated paid by NAME PPN: – SET OUT COSTS

Reporting and Review

LOCAL AUTHORITY agrees to meet with NAME PPN quarterly to: –

Review work of NAME PPN

Agreement on any matters which may have arisen

Agree any Programme of Work changes

Indemnity

NAME PPN shall indemnify LOCAL AUTHORITY in respect of any loss, damage or breach of this Agreement relating to the project for which NAME PPN is legally liable and shall supply such insurance to cover such indemnification as is required by LOCAL AUTHORITY.

Declaration I have read and fully understand the conditions contained in this Agreement. I further confirm that all conditions are fully acceptable to me and will be complied with fully.

Name:

Name:

Signed:

Signed:

Title/Role: Secretariat Member

Title/Role: A/Director of Services

Date:

Date:

16 Evaluation Checklist

This Checklist should be used by each PPN to evaluate its structures and performance in line with this Handbook.

Item	Yes / No	Comment
Structure		
Does the PPN operate a Flat Structure?		
Does the PPN have a Municipal District structure in place?		
Does the PPN have Linkage / Thematic Groups?		
Governance		
Does the PPN have a Memorandum of Understanding in Place with the Local Authority?		
Does the PPN have a Memorandum of Understanding in place between the company and the PPN where a PPN operates as an independent company?		
Where a hosting arrangement applies, does the PPN have a Service Level Agreement in place between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the hosting authority and the PPN the local authority and the hosting authority the company and the local authority? 		
Does the PPN have a current Workplan?		
Does the PPN have a current Strategic Plan?		
Does the PPN have a Constitution in place?		
If so, is the Constitution consistent with the terms of Departmental circulars and this Handbook?		
Does the PPN have sufficient HR policies in place? List in Comments section.		
Does the PPN have an up to date Data Protection Policy and Guidelines?		
Does the Secretariat have a Staff Liaison Committee in place?		
Where the PPN workers are not employed by the local authority, is there an up-to-date contract of employment in place for the PPN workers?		
Does the PPN have a Representatives Charter?		

Does the PPN have Financial Procedures in place to manage its budget?		
Has the PPN developed a Well-being Statement that promotes well-being for present and future generations?		
Is the Well-being statement reviewed by the PPN bi-annually?		
Does the PPN publish an annual account of Income and Expenditure? List across how this is done.		
Has the election of the Secretariat been carried out in accordance with procedures established and approved by the Plenary?		
Training		
Have all Secretariat Members received induction training?		
Do all Secretariat Members have access to ongoing training consistent with their role?		
Have all Representatives received induction training?		
Do all Representatives have access to ongoing training consistent with their role?		
Do all PPN Workers have access to ongoing training consistent with their role?		
Are Training Needs Analyses performed annually to ensure training provided to Member Groups is relevant to their needs?		
Membership		
Does the PPN have a Membership Induction Pack / Welcome Pack?		
Does the PPN hold an induction / welcome event for new Member Groups?		
Does the PPN re-register its total membership every two years to ensure that it is up to date?		
Is there a re-registration protocol in place?		
Does the membership of the PPN reflect the diversity of the area in which it serves?		
If not, what steps is the PPN taking to ensure it is inclusive?		
Does the Plenary meet at least twice per year?		

Does the PPN provide a report on its Workplan for presentation at the Plenary meeting?		
Have all existing policies and procedures been approved or ratified by the Plenary?		
Are all new policies and procedures approved or ratified by the Plenary?		
Does the Plenary approve the PPN Budget and Workplan?		
Is there a complaints procedure in place for Members?		
Representatives		
Is there a Representatives Charter in place?		
Is there a Reporting Template (online and/or in hardcopy) in place?		
Does the Resource Worker receive a copy of the completed Report from all Representatives following their meetings?		
Is there a procedure in place for the discipline or removal of Representatives who do not fulfil their duty?		
Do all Representatives engage with their Linkage / Thematic Groups?		
Are there any PPN representatives serving on more than one Local Authority board/ committee in their capacity as a PPN representative?		
Are all current PPN representatives to LA Boards and Committees formally ratified by the Plenary?		
Local Authority		
Does the Local Authority and PPN meet at least once per year to discuss items of interest and concern?		
Does the PPN have a dedicated contact in the Local Authority with whom it liaises on PPN matters?		



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

