



## Public Participation Network Cork City

### Linkage Groups Policy

Policy Approval	Secretariat & Plenary
Implementation Responsibility	RW, Secretariat
Date of Adoption by Secretariat	13 October 2022
Date of Adoption by Plenary	
Date of Review*	September 2024

\*Policies may need ad hoc changes made to comply with DRCD Circulars, etc. These changes may need to be implemented between Plenaries. These changes should be done with the approval of the Secretariat and approved at the next Plenary.

\*Reviews may happen sooner than the stated date by request of members. Members should write a brief request to the Secretariat, noting the concerns or issues they have. Requests should be as specific as possible. Secretariat will then consider the request and bring forward the date for review if they feel a review is necessary.

## **Linkage Groups**

Linkage Groups are a gathering of PPN member 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 themed area. They do this by advocating for policy changes on behalf of the community by engaging with Cork City Council and other relevant bodies.

Linkage Groups bring together PPN member organisations and groups with a common interest to discuss their diverse views and interests in a specific policy area. This is a pathway for such member groups to have a real input into policy in their areas of interest. Linkage Groups are an essential component of the work of the PPN. Linkage Groups operate under the PPN Plenary, and report to the PPN Secretariat.

While Linkage groups are linked to committees, they should work towards a proactive model of engagement rather than being always led by the agenda of the linked committee. For example, they may proactively look at a particular area of policy and develop a PPN specific Issues Paper on this. If this comes up on the committee, the PPN Rep can be informed and empowered by this existing PPN stance/policy, rather than reacting to a new agenda item on the committee they serve.

## **Principal Linkage Groups**

There are five (5) principal Linkage Groups operating at a Cork City Council area level:

1. Housing, Planning and Transport
2. Climate Action and Environment & Natural Heritage
3. Diversity, Disability and Inclusion
4. Arts, Community, Heritage and Sport (including International Relations 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 members. Linkage Groups or thematic sub-groups may also be established on an issue basis or as requested. Membership records must note the areas of interest of members.

## **Membership**

- Organisations registered with the PPN are entitled to become a member of any Linkage Groups.

- On completion of the Registration Form, organisations can specify which Linkage Group(s) 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 different Linkage Groups. (i.e. The PPN member should not be the same person from the same organisation representing that organisation at all Linkage Groups).

### **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 Cork City 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 Cork City on various public and private structures through the nomination of Linkage Group members to relevant decision-making structures as PPN Representatives.
- Give a mandate to its PPN Representative. Give support 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, realistic and inclusive.
- Provide PPN Member groups 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 Papers 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.
- Develop and innovate specific action-based projects and submit these for consideration to the annual PPN work plan.
- Facilitate engagement with relevant state agencies such as Cork City Council, An Garda Síochána, HSE, Fáilte Ireland, etc.
- 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 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.

### **Responsibilities of the Linkage Group**

Responsibilities of the Linkage Groups members are 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.

### **Rights of the Linkage Group members are to:**

- Nominate and elect relevant committee Representatives who serve on SPCs.
- 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.
- Representative 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.

### **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.
- That fair time is given to different members to speak and that quieter voices are given an opportunity to contribute.

The wider role of the facilitator of the Linkage Group Facilitator 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 Linkage Group.
- Assist the Linkage Group members to understand their common goal.
- Provide leadership without taking over and remain neutral as much as possible in discussions. Whilst it is important to maintain neutrality in the role of Facilitator, the individual may have a lived experience or perspective that may be helpful to the discussion. When these times arise, the Facilitator should signal that they wish to speak in their personal capacity and not in their capacity as Facilitator and this should be noted in the minutes, if necessary.
- Encourage members of the group to take on tasks and get involved in progressing issues.
- To look for gaps in capacity of linkage groups and its members and feed this back to workplan/budget consultation so that resources can be sought and provided for training or other helpful opportunities.

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- Support elected PPN Representatives who have been elected to represent the PPN on policy committees.

If a facilitator is not available for a Linkage Group meeting, the linkage group members should be asked in advance to nominate an alternative prior to the meeting. Where an alternative facilitator is not nominated in advance, the meeting shall appoint a facilitator. This should be the first order of business of the meeting. They should be proposed and seconded. Where more than one person is nominated a simple majority vote should be taken.

Linkage Group Facilitators are considered PPN Representatives.

## **Appendix 1: General Linkage Group description and themes**

### **Housing, Planning and Transport Linkage Group**

#### **Themes and Areas Covered by this Linkage Group and its related SPCs:**

Urban Development Fund, Local Area Plans/Master Plans/Statutory Area Plans City Centre Retail Policy, Cork Area Strategic Plan Policy Reports, Protected Structures, Derelict Sites Policy, Docklands, City Development Plan – Policies, Enterprise Development, Enforcement Policy, Noise Action Plan, Parking Policy, Speed Bye-laws, Cycling Strategy, Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, Capital Infrastructure Development, Transportation Planning, Public Transport Issues, Cork Road Safety Plan, Walking Strategy, Housing Strategies: Homelessness, Strategic Housing Developments, New Scheme Policy Adoption e.g. Affordability Housing, Allocation Schemes, Estate Management Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Traveller Accommodation Plan

#### **Representative SPCs:**

**Roads & Transportation: 2 Representatives**

**Housing: 2 Representatives**

**Strategic, Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning: 1 Representative**

### **Climate Action and Environment & Natural Heritage Linkage Group**

#### **Themes and Areas Covered by this Linkage Group and its related SPCs:**

Flood Relief Policy, Flood Defence Strategy, Environmental Impact Studies, Waste Management Plans, Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Policy, Recycling Strategies, Sustainable Development Policy, Street Cleaning Policy, Litter Control Policy, Drainage and Waste Water Treatment Plans, Parks & Open Spaces Policy, Agricultural Policy, Climate Change

#### **Representative SPCs:**

**Environment, Water & Amenity: 1 Representative**

### **Diversity, Disability and Inclusion Linkage Group**

#### **Themes and Areas Covered by this Linkage Group and its related SPCs:**

Social inclusion and Equality, community development, citizen & community engagement, Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Local Economic & Community

Development Plan (LECP) (Incorporating the 17 SDGs and Climate Action, Learning Cities, Health Cities, Rainbow Cities Networking). Community Enhancement Programme Funding, Healthy Ireland Funding, and community-based services.

**Representative on Committees:**

**Local Community Development Committee: 6 Representatives**

**Rapid Area Committees: ?**

**Drugs & Alcohol Taskforce: ?**

**Arts, Community, Cultural Heritage and Sport Linkage Group (including International Relations and Tourism)**

**Themes and Areas Covered by this Linkage Group and its related committees:**

Arts Policy, Arts Grants, Community Grants, Sports Grants, Creative Ireland Plan, Library Service Policy, Fire Service Policies and Strategies and Public Safety, Safety of Structures and Places, Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, Arts and Culture Development, Sports Facility Policy, Event Management Policy, Street Trading and Markets Policy, Development Contributions Scheme, UNESCO Learning Cities, Events - Glow Reports from Visits, Twinning requests, Events, Christmas Celebrations, St. Patrick's Day, Fleadh Cheol, SeaFest, EU Funding Programmes, Tourism Development, Marketing and City Promotion

**Representative on Committees:**

**Community, Culture and Placemaking SPC: 3 Representatives**

**International Relations: 2 Representatives**

**Community Safety Linkage Group**

**Themes and Areas Covered by this Linkage Group and its related committees:**

Consultations, discussions and recommendations on policing and crime issues within Cork City administrative area, Review levels and patterns of crime and related underlying factors, Establish and coordinate Local Policing Fora.

**Representative on Committees:**

**Joint Policing Committee: 6 Representatives**

## Appendix 2: Values of a PPN

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.