

# **Cork City**

# **Public Participation Network**

## Communications Policy (DRAFT)

February 2024

# Foreword

Cork City Public Participation Network (CCPPN) is committed to having an effective communication policy to support both internal and external stakeholders and recognises the importance of this document in guiding effective and positive interactions between all parties.

## Communications Objectives

- To facilitate open communication between community groups and the local authority.
- To facilitate internal and external communication to support building capacity, a core objective of CCPPN.
- To enable people, groups, and organisations, within the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors, to give voice to and communicate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system.
- To enable people, groups, and organisations, within the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors, to meaningfully create and effect policy making and oversight activities.
- To strengthen the ability of people, groups, and organisations to contribute in a positively and effectively to their community.
- To act as an accessible information hub and source and facilitate information for local community and voluntary, environmental, and social inclusion groups and organisations

## General Principles

- Members of CCPPN are encouraged to communicate effectively with other members of CCPPN in an open, transparent, and positive manner.
- Reasonable communication methods may be tailored to ensure effective communication between target groups, group members or individuals as agreed by those groups or individuals.
- PPNs are apolitical organisations. Cork City PPN Representatives, Secretariat members and employees may not use membership to promote any party-political messages.
- In line with the Cork City Integration Strategy, Cork City PPN is mindful that for some organisations and individuals, English may not be their primary language of communication.

- In all communications, members should not disclose any personal or confidential information.
- Members should keep communication friendly and respectful acting in a collegiate manner towards others and always refraining from defamatory language.
- Email addresses and contact details of CCPPN members should only be shared for the purpose of CCPPN business and between the members as agreed.
- All formal correspondence relating to the CCPPN to be sent to the Co-ordinator for recording and for distribution to the Secretariat, as appropriate.
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a key consideration for communication to protect the privacy of individuals and organisations. Guidance should not be used to prevent easy communication between members and efforts should be made to facilitate open communication routes between members.
- CCPPN endeavours to limit communications with member groups and within / between Secretariat members to particular times (i.e. Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 6.00 pm) except where a situation is of such gravity that the presiding Facilitator is of the opinion that communications need to be sent to Secretariat members.

## Internal PPN Communication

Communication between CCPPN Plenary – Secretariat - Representatives - Staff

### Plenary

The Plenary is made up of all the registered member groups of the CCPPN. The CCPPN will communicate with all member groups through, but not limited to, the following methods:

- Plenary meetings
  - Direct mails
  - Monthly bulletins
  - Promotional videos
  - Formal consultation
  - Social media posts
  - The CCPPN Website
  - [linktr.ee/corkcityppn](http://linktr.ee/corkcityppn)
- In most cases, the Secretariat will communicate with the Plenary through the above-mentioned methods.
  - Member groups should communicate with CCPPN in the first instance by contacting the CCPPN Coordinator.

## Secretariat

- The CCPPN Secretariat meets throughout the year, regularly, as agreed by Secretariat members.
- Documentation for Secretariat meetings is uploaded to the Secretariat SharePoint and distributed amongst the members.
- All Secretariat meetings are documented and minutes, recording the decisions of the group are posted to the CCPPN website in a timely fashion.
- Members of the Secretariat should not use membership of the CCPPN to make enquires or make observations on CCPPN or City Council matters without the express permission of the Secretariat.
- Communications to Secretariat members take place between 9.00 am and 6.00 pm Monday to Friday (except for exceptional circumstances).
- No member of the Secretariat should accept an invitation to speak on behalf of CCPPN without having the approval of the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat operates as a flat structure.

## Representatives

- Representatives are elected to act for CCPPN and its member organisations.
- Representative may not accept an invitation to speak on behalf of CCPPN without having the approval of the Secretariat.
- Representatives are required to communicate with each other and their respective Linkage/Thematic Groups in advance of committee meetings and/or Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) meetings. This must be facilitated by the PPN. The purpose of these communications is to agree the way to best pursue the objectives of CCPPN and its members. Representatives should remain focused on the committee or SPC workplan and agenda. Disagreements and differences of opinions should be discussed in advance of committee/SPC meetings and must remain internal to CCPPN.
- Representatives submit a short, written report following each committee meeting, which is then uploaded to the CCPPN website agreeing a format together.
- A Representative Network Meeting is facilitated as a networking event held quarterly for Representatives to discuss their role, responsibilities and to share experience they acquire and challenges they may experience.
- Representatives take part in regular Linkage Group meetings and may agree on additional communication methods - for example, via email, WhatsApp etc. GDPR policy

requires written or minuted permission from each member for communication purposes which may be facilitated in meeting minutes or by the Coordinator in relation to email sharing or for official messaging apps.

- Linkage Group reports are published by the Coordinator to the CCPPN website.
- Cork City PPN Co-ordinator is a primary contact for Representatives and facilitates open communication between representatives by supporting sharing of and organisation of communication methods.

## CCPPN Staff – Co-ordinator and Administrator

- The Facilitator and deputy Facilitator of the Secretariat are the day-to-day contacts for the Coordinator and Administrator.
- Neither the Coordinator nor the Administrator shall accept an invitation to speak at an external event without having the approval of the Secretariat (through the Facilitator)
- The Staff Liaison Committee, comprising three Secretariat members, meet regularly with the Co-ordinator. The Administrator is welcome to attend those meetings as required.
- The Administrator reports directly into the Co-ordinator. In the event of issues, concerns or conflicts, the Administrator may wish to talk directly to the sitting Facilitator or staff liaison committee.
- The Co-ordinator is available by phone and email to all parties.
- The Co-ordinator and Administrator should only contact CCPPN members between Monday and Friday.
- The Co-ordinator and Administrator should endeavour to respond to phone calls and emails from Secretariat members within 24 hours.

## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

**Stakeholders:** The Department of Rural and Community Development – Cork City Council

– The Host Organisation – Media

**Purpose:** This section relates to communication between CCPPN and external stakeholders

### The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), Cork City Council (CCC), St. Josephs Community Association (SJCA)

- A Working Group consisting of the CCPPN Coordinator, CCPPN Secretariat Members, The Host Organisation and CCC meet at least twice a year.

- The CCPPN Co-ordinator co-ordinates engagement between the CCPPN, the DRCD, CCC and Host Organisation and any other host or funding organisations that may come on board in future.
- Correspondence between these parties should be recorded by the Co-ordinator in the CCPPN database.
- In the event of a confidential matter or complaint, the Secretariat may contact the DRCD, CCC or Host Organisation or another appropriate organisation directly.

## The Media

- Before speaking to media on behalf of CCPPN, Representatives or Secretariat members or PPN workers should seek approval from the Secretariat.
- In the course of day-to-day work, the Co-ordinator may draft press releases and other routine media communications and seek approval from the Secretariat before releasing same.

## Social Media

Social media can be used in a positive way to highlight the work that CCPPN is doing, as well as being useful for supporting member group activities. In referring to CCPPN via your own social media, the following points should be taken into consideration.

- Check the accuracy and sensitivity of what you are posting before pressing submit.
- Confidential information relating to CCPPN work must not be published online.
- Stay respectful of others' views and opinions.
- Try to add value to the work and ethos of CCPPN where appropriate and reflect the inclusive ethos of CCPPN.
- Do not use ethnic, religious or discriminatory comments, remarks or slurs, insults or obscenities.
- Do not engage in conduct that would be viewed as unacceptable online, e.g. cyberbullying.
- Share information that in your best estimation you know to be true and check with another person if in doubt.
- CCPPN social media accounts are managed by the Administrator and Co-ordinator.
- Member organisations, CCPPN Representatives and Secretariat Members may wish from time to time to use the CCPPN social media accounts to highlight their work, as it relates to CCPPN, and to support their position as influencers of public policy.

- Requests to post content on social media can be submitted to [info@corkcityppn.ie](mailto:info@corkcityppn.ie) for consideration by the Secretariat.
- All members are encouraged to follow and support CCPPN's social media policy.
- No member organisation, Representative, Secretariat member, Staff person or other person or organisation associated with CCPPN shall post negatively or irresponsibly about CCPPN.

## Confidentiality

For the CCPPN, openness, transparency and democratic processes are core values. During the course of their work with CCPPN, Representatives, Secretariat Members and staff may at times become privy to information that is confidential to the organisations they represent, or even personal in nature to the individuals engaged with CCPPN. In such instances, all parties are required and expected to treat that information with the utmost respect, consideration, and confidentiality. Breaches in confidentiality are treated with gravity and may be subject to complaint or grievance in line with the CCPPN Grievance and Complaints Policy.

Examples of confidential information may include:

- Individual statements or opinions expressed during CCPPN meetings. In minutes the group decision will be reported not the general discussion.
- Any issues concerning employment including salaries and / or salary scales.
- Information relating to groups or individuals in the area that is not in the public arena.
- Disciplinary, grievance and /or complaints issues.
- Personal difficulties that either voluntary members or staff may be experiencing.
- Any internal difficulties within the CCPPN including disagreements or difficulties between individuals within the CCPPN, Secretariat members, other volunteers, or staff.

## Complaints and Grievance:

Any complaints or grievances arising from communications activities, either internal or external, involving any stakeholders operating under this document, will be dealt with in line with the CCPPN Grievance and Complaints Policy