

Cork County PPN Representatives' Charter

DRAFT for Plenary Approval

1.0 Introduction

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.

2.0 Principles Governing PPN Representation

The following principles apply to PPN representation.

- All PPN representatives on Boards or Committees of Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for Cork County Council shall report to and take direction from their respective Linkage Group / Thematic Network, where these exist.
- All contributions and views expressed by PPN Representatives shall be in line with the guidance or mandate from the Linkage Group and in line with agreed PPN policies and positions.
- 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.

3.0 Importance of Support for PPN Representatives

Cork County 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.

Cork County 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.

Cork County PPN is appreciative of the experience and knowledge that Representatives bring to their roles, and the time that Representatives give, which helps to make the PPN a stronger and more effective voice on behalf of community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in Cork County.

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.

4.0 Responsibilities of the PPN to the Representatives

Representatives are Cork County 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 ongoing training for representatives where possible;
- Being familiar with the Representatives and the role of the Committees and Groups that they have representation on;
- Listening to the issues raised by Representatives and responding promptly to these issues;
- Taking the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the PPN;
- Consulting directly with the Representative(s), or through the Linkage group/Thematic Network, to discuss any matters to be raised at meetings;
- Ensuring that Representatives are advised directly, or through the Linkage Groups/Thematic Network, of any consultations or issues the PPN or Secretariat is undertaking;
- Treating all Representatives in accordance with the PPN's Policies and adhere to the PPN's Charter.
- Providing the Representative with a clear indication of decisions made that might impact on their work on behalf of the PPN;
- Ensuring feedback from Representatives is shared with PPN member groups;
- Ensuring that Representatives receive out of pocket/travel expenses to enable them to participate in committees they were elected to as per the Cork County PPN Travel and Expenses Policy.

5.0 Responsibilities of the Linkage Group/Thematic Network to the PPN Representatives.

Where they are in place, Linkage Groups (or Thematic Networks) will:

- 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.

6.0 Responsibilities of Committees to the PPN Representatives

Where a Committee or Board has sought representation from the PPN, it will:

- 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;
- Hold at least some meetings at times, dates and locations that facilitate the participation of volunteers. Ideally these dates should be set annually;
- 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.;
- 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.
- Reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by the Representative in the course of their participation at the relevant Committee or Board.

The PPN will seek assurances from each Committee or Board on which there is PPN representation that it will undertake to fulfil the above responsibilities.

7.0 Responsibilities of Representatives

Any individual who becomes a representative of the PPN, undertakes the following:

- To be committed to the aims, objectives and principles of Cork County Public Participation Network;
- Portray the PPN and the Linkage Group in a positive and constructive way;
- To be willing to be representative of the PPN as a whole and to advocate for the PPN, Secretariat and Linkage Group/Thematic Network;
- To recognise that the Linkage Group/Thematic Network or PPN plenary is the decision-making body and that decisions may conflict with their own opinion. Participate in meetings solely on behalf of PPN, leaving any personal, business or political interests outside;
- To ask for support or backup when needed;
- Be open and honest in dealings with all stakeholders;
- To be willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant Committee, Board or Group that they sit on and any associated sub-groups to which they are appointed;

- To take the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the PPN and the Committee or Group;
- Prepare thoroughly for, attend and participate actively in Linkage Group and Board or Committee.
- Be able to use basic electronic communications effectively (i.e. email and internet browsing).
- To be willing and able to engage fully 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. Work openly and collaboratively with all Linkage Group members to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc., respecting the diversity of views expressed;
- 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).
- To bring forward the issues of the Linkage Group to the Board or Committee for their consideration, including placing items on the Agenda, and feedback using plain English to the Linkage Group;
- To 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.
- To build positive relationships, network and work strategically with other Board or Committee members for the benefit of the PPN and the Linkage Group, including being able to compromise while retaining the core objective;
- To ensure that any conflict of interest is clearly stated in relation to discussions and decision making on committees;
- To clearly indicate whether feedback provided reflects a factual view of the meeting or a personal view;
- To 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;
- To make a commitment, where there are multiple PPN Reps on one committee, 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;
- To have due regard to issues of confidentiality when reporting from meetings;
- To 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;
- To attend and participate fully in the Plenary, Representatives Forum and Representative Training and training organised by the relevant Committee or Board;
- To adhere to the PPN's Charter and Policies.

8.0 Rights of the PPN Representative

Any individual who becomes a representative of the PPN, has a right to expect the following:

- 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.

9.0 Vacancies

Representatives are elected to the Joint Policing Committee (JPC), Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), among others – usually on a three-year basis or the term determined by the Committee/ Board. In the event of vacancies arising.

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

9.1 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 (obtained from the PPN website, or requested via email from ppn@corkcoco.ie or by phone 021 4285340) which includes a short biography of the candidate.

9.2 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 the Constitution.

For PPN vacancies on committees and bodies (excluding the Secretariat) the election count shall take place at the Linkage Group for the relevant committee, or at the Secretariat in the event that no relevant Linkage Group is currently established. The Resource Worker will notify all qualifying member groups that an election for vacancies will take place and requesting nominations. They will also support the operation of the ballot.

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 Secretariat, elections shall take place at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Plenary. All member groups will have been notified previously of vacancies arising and the request for nominations. Those standing for election will have been notified prior to the Plenary. AGM

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

9.3 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.

9.4 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 Appendices of the PPN Constitution and on the webpage www.corkcountypn.com . A Linkage Group, or a member of a Linkage Group responsible for that representative, may submit a formal complaint about that representative as per the Complaints Procedure.

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.

10.0 Code of Conduct for PPN Representatives

Members and Representatives of the PPN shall always conduct themselves in a professional manner and in accordance with the provisions of the PPN's Constitution and the Code of Conduct adopted thereunder. See Appendices of the PPN Constitution for Code of Conduct.

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.

10.1 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.

Date approved by Plenary: _____