

CORK COUNTY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

CONSTITUTION

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 Cork County Council engages with the Local Communities and the Local Communities with the Cork County Council.

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 Cork County Council's areas of responsibilities. The PPN is the mechanism through which Community representation is provided on committees of the Cork County Council, such as:

- Strategic Policy Committees
- Local Community Development Committee
- Joint Policing Committee
- other authorities and committees outside of the Cork County Council remit

with the number of representatives to be elected onto each agreed with Cork County Council 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 "Cork County Public Participation Network" otherwise referred to as Cork County PPN or the PPN.

3. AIMS

The aims of the Cork County PPN shall be to:

- Represent the Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary Sector's interests of Cork County on Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for Cork County Council (Core Function).
- Participate in and contribute to the Development of the Vision of Cork County Council for the Well-being of this and future generations.
- Social, Cultural, Technological and Economic Development of the Cork County Area.
- Proactively promote the benefits and advantages of Community Representation on Boards and Committees.
- Ensure that all community-based organisations and groups in the Cork County area are aware of the work and existence of the PPN.
- Ensure that all community-based organisations and groups in Cork County are aware of the Nomination Process to structures within the PPN.

- Ensure that all Community Sector representation on all Cork County Council sponsored bodies is selected via the Cork County 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 Cork County Council.
- Ensure that all relevant Information of Cork County Council 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 Cork County Council 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 Cork County Council 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 Cork County 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 Cork County Public Participation Network is to enable the Community of Cork County to:

- Take an active role in the policy making and oversight activities of Cork County Council's areas of responsibilities.
- Influence improved decision making in the Cork County Council area, and
- To be the main link through which Cork County Council engages with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

4.2 Vision

That Cork County PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all Cork County 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

Cork County Public Participation Network is:

- Inclusive: We accept all volunteer-led organisations in **county Cork**. 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 Cork County Council 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 Cork County 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

Cork County 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 Cork County PPN is open to community groups and organisations who:

- ✓ Have an address in Cork County 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 Cork County or through their Local Cork County Branch (the local branch shall be eligible to vote and hold the representative position).
- ✓ Complete the Cork County PPN 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 Cork County PPN Registration form. The Cork County PPN Register is co-managed by the PPN Secretariat and the Cork County Council Community Development Office
- The Cork County PPN Registration form can be filled out on the PPN website or a hard copy may be requested from the PPN or Cork County Council.
- The Cork County PPN Registration form is used to register groups for the purpose of membership of the PPN and for the purposes of accessing supports and funding from Cork County Council.
- Cork County Registration 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 Cork County 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 Cork County 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 Cork County 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 Cork County 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. (Note: Membership of the Environmental College must be confirmed by the Irish Environmental Network as meeting the above criteria.)

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 risen.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects representatives to the Local Community Development Committee, where vacancies have risen.
- At least one (1) member from each registered group or organisation holding Full Membership shall be entitled to attend. However many members attend from an organisations they shall have only one (1) vote between them 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 [reference](#)).

6.1.1 Extraordinary General Meetings

An 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 of the Secretariat for the time being shall act as the Chair of the Extraordinary General Meeting or where the Rotating Chair fails or is unable 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 Cork County PPN Secretariat will comprise 22 members drawn from PPN registered groups as follows:

6 countywide representatives from Electoral Colleges comprised of:

- Community & Voluntary College - 2 no. reps
- Social Inclusion College - 2 no. reps
- Environmental College - 2 no. reps

16 representatives from Municipal Districts comprised of 2 reps drawn from each Municipal District (there are 8 Municipal Districts Cork County- Kanturk/Mallow, Fermoy, East Cork, Cobh, Macroom, Carrigaline, Bandon/Kinsale, West Cork)

- 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 seven (7) or a multiple of (7) 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 that 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 Cork County Council area or electronically 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 responsible for the operation of Secretariat. On receipt of such request the Rotating Chair 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 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 Cork County Council:
 - Participation in Decision Making and Representation.
 - Capacity building.
 - Information Sharing and Communication.
 - Other activities as agreed.

- Engages with the Cork County Council Community Development Office regarding the Council's oversight responsibility.
- Appoints a Rotating Chair of Secretariat Meetings with a maximum term of 6 months (i.e. Plenary to Plenary). The position of Rotating Chair should rotate to ensure Secretariat members acquire relevant experience of this function. The Rotating Chair's successor should be selected prior to the Plenary meeting at which the Rotating Chair steps down.
- Works with 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 and monitors the work of the Resource Worker through the Staff Liaison Committee which is a standing committee appointed from within the Secretariat.
- 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, wherever this is possible.
- The subgroup must submit a written report at each Secretariat meeting.
- Unless it is a standing sub-committee, 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

As Rotating Chair of the Secretariat, the Rotating Chair 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 place during their term.

If the Secretariat is dissatisfied with the conduct or performance of the Rotating Chair, the Rotating Chair 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 Cork County Council 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 Cork County Council 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 Cork County 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 County 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 Cork County, 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 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 who is selected by the Linkage Group for a term of no more than 6 months.

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 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 Cork County Council 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 and the PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing (where this is developed)..
- 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 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.

The PPN recognises and supports these rights and will seek a commitment from Cork County Council and all other bodies where PPN representation is sought to support these rights also wherever this has not been secured.

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 ? (page [reference](#)) 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 ? (page [reference](#)).

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 ? (page reference). 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 ? (page reference)

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 ? for Code of Conduct (page reference)

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.

7.7.1 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 of 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 Cork County Public Participation Network's complaints policy is available in Appendix ? (page reference).

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 ? (page [reference](#)).

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 of 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 Cork County Public Participation Network Plenary held on

Signed on behalf of Cork County Public Participation Network:

Rotating Chair

Date: _____