

# Minutes of Cork County Public Participation Network Spring Plenary 01/05/2025

**Attendees:** Pauline O Dwyer (Chair), Liam McCarthy, Noel Forde, Gavin Falk, Martina Casey, John McCaffrey, Doug Lucey, David Lane, Christine Lane, John Lyons, Raffaella Valenti, Nina Orteu Pons, Phoebe Bright, Bernie Connelly, Ted Bradley, Jude Gilbert, Ena Howell, Deirdre Hickey, John Hennessy, Bill Power, Margaret Johnston, Neil Kane, Brid Coakley, Sean Kelly, Diana Skalkos, Jackie Zivna, Oscar Daly.

**Staff:** Morrin Drislane (Coordinator), Noelle Nally (Support Worker, Minute Taker)

**PPN Facilitator:** Harriet Emerson

**Guest Speakers:** Karen Twomey (Communications Hub), Ger Derring (Public Service Ombudsman)

**Apologies:** John Fuller, Jose Ospina, Nicola Meacle, Carol Harpur

**1. Welcome address by Chairperson** – Pauline O Dwyer welcomed everyone to the Plenary. Two short presentations took place – one from Karen Twomey (The Communications Hub) with a whistle stop Hints & Tips tour of various social media types, and a very informative presentation from Ger Derring, the Public Service Ombudsman.

**2. Housekeeping Duties, Health, and Safety**

**3. Adopting Plenary Standing Orders** – Proposed by Bill Power, Seconded by Martina Casey.

**4. Approval of Minutes of last Plenary and Matters Arising:** Proposed by Neil Kane, Seconded by Brid Coakley. No matters arising.

**5. PPN Activity Report by Coordinator and Support and Development Worker:**

**Recruiting Representatives** For the last six months, we ran a huge recruitment drive to fill representative roles in across the SPC & LCDC committees. This was a massive undertaking, as Cork County PPN has the highest number of representatives roles to fill of any PPN in the Country.

**SPC Submission** We collated the views of our PPN members, and put in a submission to Cork County Council's [Cork County Council Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029 \(pdf\)](#) .

**Cork Ladies on Tour!** We have been out at Networking Events all over the County, including facilitating the PPN National Workers Meeting at our Staff Retreat in Galway, in Collaboration with Cork City PPN.

That said, we are considering putting our names in the hat to hold next year's Staff Retreat in Cork – you're the first to know! This would be an opportunity to show ourselves off and showcase Cork City & County.

**National Conference** – We will ask for Expressions of Interest in the coming months for the PPN National Conference in Meath in October. We get five places at the Conference. It is a greatly beneficial event, an opportunity to meet PPN Reps from all over the Country.

**Training:** We continue to advertise and draw attention to training being offered by groups like The Wheel including: Capacity Building for PPN Members & Representatives, Revenue Compliance for Charities , Small Organisations Training

**We have facilitated:** Fundraising Fundamentals training, Strategic Planning for 2025. Over 60 people came to Fundraising training, we were delighted.

We are **due to hold training on:** Social Media, Governance & Leadership and Democratizing Advocacy (along with all Munster PPNs)

**We collaborate** with the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) who regularly run trainings around SPC and LCDC membership, for example – “How to make impactful contributions to the SPCs as a PPN Representative” taking place on Tuesday 13th May.

We held SPC reps training in January, in conjunction with PPN Facilitator Harriet Emerson, and we look to organise this again soon for our newly ratified reps.

### **Review of Policies & Procedures 2025**

- These set out how the PPN operates.
- Essential that they effectively support the working of the PPN.
- They need to respond to change (internal or external).
- Review is to check this and give PPN member groups a chance to feed into their development.

### **For review:**

- Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Procedure
- Dignity at Work
- Electoral Processes
- Email & Internet Usage
- Expectations & Responsibility of Committees with PPN Representative
- Financial guidelines
- Gathering Signatures
- Grievance Procedure
- Nomination Form
- Plenary Standing Orders
- Re-Registration Protocol
- Representatives Reporting Template
- Travel & Expenses Policy
- Vulnerable Adults Policy

### **Aim of Review:**

Ensure that these are all

- Fit for purpose
- Robust & comprehensive
- “joined up”
- Clear and unambiguous
- Up to date & any gaps are filled

### **Timetable for Review:**

#### **1. PPN member group inputs**

All policies are on the website -

<https://corkcountypn.ie/resource/category/policies/>

Inputs can be submitted direct to - [ppn@corkcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@corkcoco.ie)

Can be made up to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025

## 2. Policy Revision Member group inputs compiled

All policies & procedures reviewed in light of inputs, Departmental guidance, etc.

Draft revised policies made available ahead of Autumn Plenary for member feedback & any re-drafting completed.

Final draft policies and procedures submitted to Autumn Plenary for ratification.

### Proposed change to Reps Reporting template:

- As was sent out with the agenda, we are proposing a change to our Reps reporting template: (see screenshot)

Cork County PPN Representatives Reporting Template (Interim 16/01/25)

PPN Rep Name		Other Reps who attended meeting	
Committee Name			
Date of Meeting		Date of next meeting	

Committee Agenda Item	Notes (incl PPN comments/ motions recorded)	Outcome/Decisions Made	Actions Required - by Who & When

Other Comments/Actions required from PPN		Outcome/ decisions made	Actions required – by whom & when
Agenda Item raised by PPN	Notes		
Other comments/ actions required from PPN			

This change was agreed at the Plenary by general consensus.

**PPN Operation Support Working Group:** Cork County PPN extends across the greatest geographical area of any PPN. The County includes 8 municipal districts and uniquely encompasses 3 LCDCs. It's small budget and staff cohort is the same as all other PPNs.

In this situation, as the PPN seeks to build connections with community and voluntary organisations and perform its core functions of representation for this sector on Local Authority and County structures, capacity building, and information sharing, it must do all it can to enhance its capacity. This involves optimising all possible resources and enabling member organisations to contribute actively to the growth and effectiveness of the PPN.

**Scope (role) of Working Group:** The scope of Operational Support Working Group encompasses whatever tasks the Plenary or Secretariat delegate to it that will assist the smooth and efficient operation of the Cork County PPN and the delivery of its Workplan. Its sole purpose is to actively undertake approved work tasks on behalf of the Cork County PPN. The Working Group does not represent the PPN.

- It must abide by all PPN policies & procedures.***

- ***The Working Group will no longer be required and will disband when the Plenary deems it to be redundant or dysfunctional in such a way that is detrimental to the PPN.***

### **Duties of Working Group:**

The Working Group will work independently and will collaborate with staff and members of other PPNs in delivering tasks as needed.

Duties include but are not limited to:

- Updating of Salesforce database, re-categorisation, etc. as needed;
- Supporting staff with development of the Annual Report;
- Assisting staff with the development of the PPN Business Plan;
- Sourcing of sponsorship, prizes and support for PPN activities;
- Providing liaison with new member groups (in support of staff);
- Initial development of new policies where needed.

### **Membership of Working Group:**

- 3-7 people (at least 1 must be a Secretariat member)
- Open to all member groups (representatives in good standing) - brief statement on reasons to be included
- Shall be listed on website
- Chair (rotates annually)
- Attends min 75% meetings (50% even in instances of exceptional circumstances)
- Annual statement for report, detailing participation and inputs to a minimum of 20% of Working Group output – or deemed to have resigned.

### **Procedures of Working Group:**

- decision-making shall be by consensus insofar as possible
- No public communications in their role or purporting to represent the PPN
- report to each regular meeting of the Secretariat & annually for inclusion in the Annual report
- may recommend policies and strategies to the Secretariat
- agree details such as frequency and schedule of meetings, mechanisms for internal communication, and assignment of specific roles to individual members
- conflict resolved through appropriate positive conflict resolution measures in line with PPN policy. (If, and only if, such means of collaborative resolution are exhausted, the Secretariat shall be called on for binding adjudication.)

➔ Some discussion ensued around the concept of the Working group.

➔ C. Lane clarified that the concept is not new- there are provisions in the PPN Handbook for the Secretariat to bring in addition support where needed.

The suggested membership was 3-7 people, with at least 1 member to be from the Secretariat; D. Lucey suggested that the membership should be 8 people, one from each Municipal District.

C. Lane said this should not matter, where the work is updating the Salesforce database, for example.

B. Connolly said it is worth having Municipal District representation on the Working Group, to work as links back to the MD, and then different jobs of work can be delegated as seen fit.

➔ The introduction of the Working Group was proposed by G. Falk & seconded by D. Lucey.

### **Thematic/Linkage Groups:**

#### **Thematic/Linkage Groups Overview –**

##### **Strategic Planning Committees**

- Planning & Strategic Development
- Environment, Climate Action & Biodiversity
- Economic Development & Enterprise
- Tourism
- Housing
- Roads & Transport
- Arts, Culture & Languages
- Coastal, Marine & Flood
- Social Inclusion, Community & Rural Development

##### **Suggested Group Themes**

- Housing, Planning & Transport
- Arts, Community, Heritage & Sports
- Climate Change, Water & Environment
- Social Inclusion, Rural Development, Youth & Enterprise (including Economic development & Tourism)
- Community Safety

The Plenary was asked for it's opinion on the Linkage Group Themes, and there was discussion around same:

- I. "Tourism", should be included with Arts, Community, Heritage & Sports
- II. B. Power said he is uncomfortable with Arts being linked with Sports
- III. N. Orteu Pons suggested Sports be put with Social Inclusion instead
- IV. D. Skalkos said we should not lump Youth in with Sports, as not all young people are necessarily involved in/ interested in sport. B. Power agreed that it is a mistake to assume the Youth are interested in Sport.
- V. B. Connolly suggested we remove Sports altogether, as it is not reflected in the SPCs, and already gets enough representation from groups such as the Cork Sports Partnership
- VI. O. Daly highlighted that sport is very important in rural Ireland, that Active Retirement Groups, After School Clubs etc are all involved in Sport
- VII. There was a suggestion to include Sport with Housing, Planning & Transport, as when planning is sought for housing developments, it is always queried what sports offerings will be in the area.

- VIII. N. Forde suggested the Plenary was looking at sports in terms “Big Sport” i.e. GAA, Rugby.
- IX. There was a general consensus to change ‘Sport’ to ‘Recreation’ and include it with Social Inclusion.
- X. There was a suggestion to allow Community Safety to drop off the list of Linkage Groups for now, as it is already covered by other Committees within Cork County Council.
- O. Daly suggested instead that it go in with Housing, Planning & Transport, gave the example of a children’s play park in his locality, without appropriate signage.

N.Nally reminded the group not to assume they are on a Linkage Group just because they were in the past, as due to the shake up in the operating of the Linkage Groups, staff turnover and so on - we are starting over. Members are encouraged to email [ppn@corkcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@corkcoco.ie) to express their interest in joining any Linkage Groups.

#### **6. Finance and Budget Update - Budget 2024 –** Came in slightly under budget, so

nothing had to be given back to the DRCD.

- **Budget for 2025** has been increased n
- ationally
- **PPNs are hugely underfunded** across the Country but even more so in Cork County
- The Staff met with Deputies Dara Calleary and Jerry Buttimer, who both agreed to meet and discuss a proposal for Cork as the funding is not sufficient for the population or geographical size of the County

#### **7. Error on Agenda – item struck off**

#### **8. SPC & LCDC Election Results:**

##### **Cork County PPN SPC Reps to be Ratified –**

- Bill Power & Roisin O Connell - Tourism
- Diana Skalkos, Margaret Johnston & Marc O Sullivan – Arts, Culture & Language
- Eimear Kenneally – Social Inclusion, Community & Rural Development

- Oscar Daly – Coastal, Marine & Flooding
- Noel Walsh – Roads & Transportation
- Miles Harrigan – Planning & Strategic Development
- Phoebe Bright – Housing

L. McCarthy proposed the new SPC Reps on behalf on the Secretariat, and N.Forde seconded them.

**Cork County PPN LCDC Reps to be ratified:**

**Community & Voluntary Pillar:**

**North :** Brid Coakley & Lilian Meade

**South:** Liam McCarthy & Tom Howard

**West:** Eileen O Shea & Noel Forde

**Social Inclusion Pillar:**

**North :** Jess Angland

**South:** Jason Sheehan

**West:** Ray Murnane

**Environment Pillar:**

**North :** Ted Bradley

**South:** Caroline Ní Nualláin

**West:** Bernadette Connolly

P. O'Dwyer proposed the new LCDC reps, and C. Lane seconded them.

**9. AOB**

- ➔ G. Falk suggested the Cork County PPN should engage the Public Service Ombudsman regards our budget not being proportionate.
- ➔ G. Falk asked that we have handheld microphones at our next in-person Plenary, as he had difficulty hearing the speakers in the room .

➔ C.Lane suggested something be put on the workplan, to renew the interest in Municipal District Plenaries

## **10. Closing Remarks**

P. O’Dwyer extended her thanks to everyone for coming out on such a beautiful, sunny evening.

She gave her thanks to the trainers, Karen Twomey (Communications Hub), Ger Derring (Public Service Ombudsman), and encouraged everyone to keep an eye on their emails for the slides.

She gave her thanks to Noelle and Morrin, to Liam McCarthy, Noel Forde and the entire Staff Liaison Subgroup.

Thanks to Harriet Emerson, Facilitator – “outstanding in her field” !

The Plenary slides will be sent out. Any questions, email [ppn@corkcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@corkcoco.ie) .

Consent for the sharing of photos taken at the Plenary was confirmed.

**This concluded the business of the meeting.**