
Public Participation Networks

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is there a means of bringing sports groups into the PPN process?

As voluntary organisations with a constitution the sports groups can apply to become a member of a Municipal District PPN as long as they fit the criteria of a local voluntary organisation. Please refer to section 2.6.1 of guidelines.

2. Is there any opportunity for Electoral College representation to be guided by the Electoral College proportional make up on PPN database/plenary?

There is no opportunity for Electoral College representation to be guided by the Electoral College proportional make up.

3. Is there a possibility that consideration could be given to an additional representative for the PPN Secretariat from a Gaeltacht areas?

As per guidelines issued, the PPN secretariat should consist of one representative from each Municipal District and as outlined in the guidelines in section 2.7 and 2.8 all representatives nominated should represent their nominating structure and not their organisation. In all elections of PPN representatives, care will be taken to ensure:

- Gender balance
- Geographical spread of representatives

4. In relation to the graphic in the draft guidelines there are not any return arrows from SPCs or other Government Bodies or the LCDC indicating it is not a two way relationship – is there a reason for this or is the graphic complete?

Please refer to section 2.8 of Guidelines and note that the two way flow of communication is crucial to the success of the PPN framework. It will be the responsibility of the PPN to support and work with their representatives to ensure that appropriate structures are in place to facilitate a two way relationship. This should take account of the most appropriate and relevant means of communicating with various groups taking account of varying impacts of geography, mobility and ICT literacy.

5. In reference to 2.9 of the draft guidelines ‘Promoting Well-being’, what is the relevance of this in the context of the PPN guidelines?

Section 2.9 is based on the recognition that sustainable development is directly linked to the well-being of communities and individuals. Therefore any framework for public participation must look at ensuring and supporting this well-being and in particular in the support of those communities and representatives who are active in the PPN. The promotion of well-being of this and future generations is a key cornerstone of the purpose of establishing PPNs and of shaping their engagement with the Local Authority.

6. What is the proposed annual roll out cost operating the PPN given that counties /cities differ in size, diversity in language, population and wealth?

It is a matter for each Local Authority to provide on-going funding to support the structures, following the completion of the relevant regulations and guidelines. Providing adequate support is essential. Adequate resourcing is one definite measure of the good faith of the Local Authority in implementing this structure and securing local engagement.

**7. Will the findings from the pilot PPNs be reviewed and communicated to all PPNs?
How comprehensive will the evaluation of the Pilot PPNs be?**

It is proposed that a summary of feedback on implementation issues arising from the experience of the pilot PPNs will be made available to each Local Authority once final reports on the pilots have been received by the Department.

**8. Clarification is needed on what is a linkage group and the role of the linkage group.
Also what is the timeframe for linkage groups and how is it envisaged that they will evolve?**

When the Local Authority seeks representative(s) for its various County Committees, SPCs etc. they contact the PPN secretariat with the details. The PPN secretariat then contacts ALL organisations who are members of the PPN indicating the place(s) that are available and calling all interested organisations with an interest in this issue (stakeholders) to a meeting. The group of organisations that assembles is the PPN's Linkage Group on this particular topic. The Linkage Group chooses the PPN's representatives sought by the Local Authority. The linkage group will be set up when there is a new committee or structure established by the council that requires public participation. The linkage group will be in place until the committee or structure has been dissolved by the council. The linkage group will operate as a reference group for the person they have chosen to represent their group and should meet regularly to support the nominated representative to be informed and reflect the viewpoints of the linkage group.

9. You are aware that Foras in many of the LAs under the Community Forum have built up a registrar of groups over the years. Keeping in mind data protection etc. is there any mechanism for dovetailing such an up to date register with compiling a listing for the proposed plenaries under the new PPN?

The DECLG have no issue with using the databases held by the previous community fora, however we would recommend that you seek the advice of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

10. Is there a chance that the guidelines will be amended to more truly reflect actual sectoral participation?

Please refer to response in Question 2 above.

11. Can Local Authorities use the pre-existing forum that has worked well to become the PPN?

PPNs must be set up immediately in all Local Authority areas at county level. It is imperative that the secretariat and linkage groups are put in place; this will provide the basis for two-way information flows between the Local Authority and the local community. With effect from 1 June 2014, where community representation is to be provided on appropriate committees of the Local Authority, such as SPCs/LCDCs etc., it must be sourced through the PPN. It is essential that the structure that is being put in place follows all of the PPN guidelines and adheres to the complete PPN framework that should be put in place for every Local Authority in the Country.

12. Are Groups that registered with the Community & Voluntary Forum now defunct, do they all have to register again for the PPN process?

Groups that were previously registered with C&V forum must register with the PPN and self-select the Electoral College that is appropriate for their organisation.

13. Are Groups that are registered for the PPN process at a given date after the public meetings to establish PPN Structures are they entitled to vote for representatives on Colleges and on the Secretariat?

All groups registered by the agreed deadline will have one vote for the selection of representatives from their respective College to the Secretariat and one vote from the Municipal Districts PPNs that they are participating in to select a representative to the Secretariat.

14. If vacancies arise next year on Local Authority committees, do Groups have to be registered for a twelve month period before they can have voting rights?

If Groups are registered by the agreed deadline each year for the following year, they will have voting rights for the following year and can fully participate on all PPN structures and represent the PPN on local Authority Committees.

15. Is the registration of groups following the establishment of PPN Structures in future years a matter for Secretariat and not Local Authority?

Once the PPN Secretariat and all other structures have been fully established, the Secretariat will oversee the registration of organisations with support from the Chief Officer (if needed).

16. Can the PPN be used as a consultation body for agencies other than the Local Authority e.g. other more centrally based state agencies?

The DECLG have no issue with PPN been used as a consultation body for other agencies; however there would need to be local agreement with all stakeholders on this.

17. What is the best way to commence the establishment of PPN's where there is no active C&V Fora and the county has a number of districts which will require perhaps holding a number of information sessions within each district to get a buy in. What is the best way to do this and how to devise a framework in tandem with all of this?

From our oversight of progress to date, as a starting point, most local authority areas have developed an information dissemination strategy including the roll out of public information sessions in each Municipal District. As part of their support role, Pobal will be organising national and regional events to allow each area to network with one another and exchange ideas on what has worked well in the roll out of the PPN. This will give you the opportunity to network with other colleagues that are working from a similar starting point.

18. We are progressing with the establishment of the PPN. In this regard we note that the establishment of the PPN is a formal process requiring preparation of a draft framework, advertisement, consultation, and approval as a reserved function of the Council. Is it in order to commence this formal process in advance of issue of Regulations covering same?

Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (substituting a new section 127 of the Local Government Act 2001) to give effect to the Framework for Public Participation) was commenced on 1 June 2014, along with a number of other sections of the Act. The PPNs must be set up immediately in all Local Authority areas at county level. It is imperative that the secretariat and linkage groups are put in place; this will provide the basis for two-way information flows between the Local Authority and the local community. With effect from 1

June 2014, where community representation is to be provided on appropriate committees of the Local Authority, such as SPCs/LCDCs etc., it must be sourced through the PPN. As outlined in Circular Letters CVSP1/2014 and CVSP2/2014 to Chief Executives, the processes required under the current guidelines to set up the PPNs at the county level should be implemented immediately. These circulars indicate that regulations will be made by December 2014. Section 127(6) provides an option for the Minister to make regulations in relation to the adoption and establishment of a Framework, but such regulations are not a requirement before a Framework is adopted. Section 127(7) provides that the Minister may issue general policy guidelines for the purposes of any provision of section 127 (including any regulations made under subsection (6)), and each local authority shall comply with any such guidelines that relate to it. Circular Letters CVSP1/2014 and CVSP2/2014 constitute such guidelines.

19. For an organisation to be registered under the Voluntary Electoral College with a PPN, is it requirement that voluntary organisations have a constitution, an officer structure, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary etc., a Bank Account, Garda Vetting etc? Or are any of these elements optional?

All organisations registered for the PPN should have an agreed set of rules and a working structure that informs the appropriate workings and structures for that organisation, which may differ across organisations. In most cases, this will likely be a constitution.

20. Groups are asking whether or not they will have to be registered with PPNs to access funding, e.g. funding from Local Development Companies?

The DECLG would recommend that all organisations that fit into the 3 electoral colleges should register for the PPN so that they can ensure input into decision making within the Local Authority system. However the criteria for funding programmes is a matter for the relevant funding agency.

21. a) In relation to the Voluntary Electoral College and the Social Inclusion Electoral College, Groups are looking for more guidance as to the definition of each college and for more clarity as to which college organisations should register under, e.g. where an active retirement group represents both social inclusion and is a voluntary group?

b) Groups are also asking who validates the Social Inclusion and Voluntary Groups? If these groups are to be validated by the Local Authority upon application for registration with the PPN under either college, what validation process should be followed?

c) Can the DECLG draft a generic Eligibility Criteria for Membership of the Social Inclusion Electoral College and the Voluntary Electoral College in the interest of clarity and countrywide continuity?

The DECLG will be liaising with the PPN National Reference Group to agree national criteria for membership of the Social Inclusion and Voluntary Electoral Colleges. As part of this, the DECLG will also be looking at an appropriate validation process. Once this has been agreed, it will disseminated to each Local Authority. In the meantime, a working definition of a Social inclusion organisation is an organisation whose main activity centres on working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

- 22. a) Does the Municipal District Plenary have a Committee structure, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary etc.?**
- b) Does the County Plenary have a Committee structure, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary etc.?**
- c) Does the Secretariat have a Committee structure, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary etc.?**
- d) Do Linkage Groups have a Committee structure, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary etc.?**

It is recommended by the Citizen Engagement Working Group that the structures within the PPN should be flat. Therefore DECLG recommend that a contact person is identified for each structure and that this role is rotated on an agreed periodic basis. People filling this role may be called 'convenors' or 'facilitators' or some such title.

- 23. When the LCDC is seeking nominations from each of the Electoral Colleges, i.e. Environment, Social Inclusion and Community, should 1 Linkage Group be established to fill all vacancies or should 3 separate Linkage Groups be established for the nomination from each college?**

Community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sector representation on the LCDC is elected through the "electoral college" system. Groups within an electoral college, who have an interest in the LCDC, will form the linkage group (i.e. for the LCDC the linkage social inclusion group will be a sub set of the social inclusion college). For all other elections onto LA committees (unless specified otherwise), a linkage group will be formed across all colleges to elect the appropriate person.

24. Which college should different groups such as active retired groups, youth groups or protest groups register under?

Please refer to working definition of membership Social Inclusion College in previous FAQ (Q21 pg. 8) and the criteria already available for the Environmental Pillar. If any groups do not fit into either one of these criteria then they should be placed into the voluntary electoral college as long as their aims and objectives are in line with the principles of the PPN and they are a non-profit organisation.

25. How long does a Group have to be in existence for before they register with a PPN, e.g. the Environmental Pillar Criteria for Membership of Environmental Electoral College of County/City Public Participation Networks (PPNs) specifies that organisations must have been in existence for a period of at least 12 months prior to an application for membership? Does this period of 12 months apply to Voluntary and Social Inclusion organisations?

The DECLG recommend that groups should be in existence for at least 6 months to register for the Social Inclusion and Voluntary Pillars and have a presence and postal address in a Municipal District.

26. For a County Group/Network which does not have any branches at municipal level, e.g. Age Equality Network, can such a group join the County PPN directly or must the group register with a Municipal PPN in order to become a member of the County PPN?

Groups must register with the Municipal District where their postal address is based and all county based groups/network should only have one vote at county PPN level.

27. Can the Chief Executive Officer put together an adviser committee to help set up the PPN e.g. get templates and media and meeting with the public to make them aware.

It's the decision of each individual Local Authority to put in place whatever appropriate requirements to ensure the PPN guidelines are implemented fully and as long as they are in line with the principles of PPN Framework.

28. Where a Local Authority are putting together the PPN register and an applicant asks the following: "Some committees would have the same people as their - 'person that the group is nominating to be their representative at PPN meetings: 'If the same person is the nominee in more than one group - what would be the situation if there was a vote? Can one person only vote on behalf of one group at an election?"

The PPN framework is very clear in outlining that there is only one vote per organisation and the individual representing the organisation articulates this vote as directed by their organisation. The DECLG would be concerned about the scenario where an individual is representing a number of organisations and would be recommending that this should be avoided as this may give an unfair advantage to the individual in seeking nomination on to the secretariat or other bodies.

29. (a) Further to Question 21(c), when will the criteria for the Social Inclusion College and the Voluntary College be available?
(b) When will the validation process be available?

We envisage that the criteria for the Social Inclusion and Voluntary colleges will be finalised after the second meeting of the National Reference Group in late September. In the meantime please use the working definition for the social inclusion college in Question 21.

30. In relation to the note under Section 50 of the Local Community Development Committee (Section 128E) Regulations 2014 that travelling and subsistence expenses for Members shall not be met by the Local Authority, unless arranged by the Chief Officer in consultation with the Local Authority. Is it intended that travelling and subsistence expenses or Per Diems will be paid to PPN members who attend meetings of either the Municipal or County Plenaries or meetings of the Secretariat?

Travel and Subsistence expenses of PPN representatives on the LCDC (and SPC's) should be covered by the nominating organisation where possible. In cases where this is not possible, the matter should be referred to the Chief Officer.

31. Is there a maximum number which can be nominated from each college to the Secretariat?

There is no maximum number for nominations from each college to the secretariat and you will note from section 3.4 that it is crucial that each college must have an equal number of representatives with a minimum of two from each college.

32. Can the Local Authority decide on the maximum number to be nominated from each college?

The Local Authority should take the lead in determining the maximum number to be nominated to the secretariat from each college at the initial stages of setting up the PPN, but it would be also useful to get input from other stakeholders in the community and voluntary sector on this.

33. Can the Local Authority adjust the maximum number from each college, if required?

As above, however it would not be advisable to adjust the maximum number of each college during the setting up of the PPN. If there is a need to adjust the number, then this should be reviewed and agreed by the PPN once established.

34. How can Local Authorities seek to ensure appropriate community representation for SPC's from the PPN.

When choosing representatives for SPCs the relevant PPN Linkage Groups will ensure that:

- Where the Council SPC scheme has specified the particular college(s) from which representatives are to be nominated (i.e. social inclusion / environment / community-voluntary) the PPN Linkage Group will choose representatives from those colleges to fill the relevant positions.
- Where the Council SPC scheme has **not** specified the particular college(s) from which representatives are to be nominated then the following applies:
 - (a) Where the SPC is to deal with significant social inclusion issues that at least one of the chosen representatives is drawn from the Social Inclusion College.
 - (b) Where the SPC is to deal with significant environmental/planning issues that at least one of the chosen representatives is drawn from the Environment College.

35. Can the current non-statutory arrangements in place for community engagement with the local authority be re-branded to fulfil the role of the PPN.

The PPN will be made up of all community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups in the community, not just those individuals and groups who currently take a lead in local matters under the existing non-statutory structures. The PPN does not have a board or a chair; as such it is quite different to the existing structure and arrangements. The guidelines do not allow the existing Community and Voluntary Forum to become the PPN; there is no issue with the existing C&V Forum assisting with/facilitating the PPN set-up, which requires a secretariat and linkage groups to be put in place. Once an issue for consideration by the LA, which affects the local community, is determined, the LA will contact the PPN secretariat. The secretariat will call a meeting of the PPN and all stakeholders with an interest in the issue will be invited to attend. These are now the linkage group, which selects a community/social inclusion/environmental sector

representative to sit on an SPC (or otherwise engage with the LA on the issue). This representative must report back to the linkage group/the PPN and feedback to and from the LA and the PPN on the issue.

In this type of arrangement, no one group can be self-selected as the representative group for the issue (it may well be that a member of a special interest group becomes the community representative, but the PPN arrangement will ensure that they must have a 2-way interaction between all the members of the linkage group/PPN and the LA. In this way the PPN is the conduit for organised engagement between the LA and the community/social inclusion/environmental sector; all stakeholders can have a voice in the new structure and can have access to all SPCs etc. at all times.

36. In relation to the PPN is there a generic presentation template available that we could apply to our own PPN area. If available could a generic presentation template on the PPN could be circulated.

There is no generic presentation template available at present. The Department will undertake to make one available by 19 September to all Local Authorities.

37. From Municipal District PPN draft guidelines specify one Member from each Municipal District. In our Local Authority there are only two Municipal Districts, one which contains two electoral areas and is therefore twice the size and population of the other Municipal District. It would therefore be logical from a proportionality and fairness perspective that the larger Municipal District PPN has a greater number of Members on the Secretariat. Due to the low number of Municipal Districts in our Local Authority, we were considering proposing that one MD PPN had 3 Members on Secretariat and the other MD PPN had 2 Members on Secretariat. Is this in order?

The guidelines indicate that the secretariat will consist of 1 rep from each MD + an equal number of representatives from each of the community, social inclusion and environment colleges. The minimum representation from the colleges on the County PPN should be two

from each. In the case of this Local Authority, which has two MD's, then the secretariat would have a minimum of 8 members, two from each college and the other two members being drawn from any community organisation. There is no maximum specified numbers of representatives on the secretariat, so it is possible to accommodate greater numbers on the secretariat; for example, you could have three reps from each college + the two reps from the MD's, a total of 11 or even four from each college + two reps for the MD's, which would be a total of 14 on the secretariat. It is important to understand that the secretariat has clearly defined roles and is not in itself the PPN.

38. From Electoral College due to the large difference in the numbers of organisation in each college, it is not logical or fair for equal numbers of Members from each college on Secretariat (per Q31 of FAQ). A much fairer representation might be:

2 No. from Environmental College

3 No. from Social Inclusion College

5 No. from Voluntary College

In order to get buy-in and encourage participation by community groups the PPN structure must be seen as fair and equitable.

As above.

39. (a) Where a national organisation with 25 branches nationwide (covering 25 counties or more) are wondering if there is a mechanism in place for the national office to submit applications for all our branches at one time or do they need to submit them individually to their local authorities?

(b) In some cases a branch would cover numerous area's in the county and on some of the forms they ask what area's would you be involved in. Would our branch need to tick all these boxes?

(c) As a National Office, currently based in Dublin, where would we need apply to - would it be the Local Authority area that we need apply to?

The PPNs are a mechanism for engagement with Local Authorities. All applications must be made to the Local Authority. In the case of a national organisation, their local branch or affiliate needs to register directly with the Local Authority. There is no role for the PPN in respect of national offices submitting applications to the Local Authority. All applications need to be submitted from local branches to their respective local authorities and they should only select the Municipal District where the local branch is based in.

40. (a) For county wide organisations with several local branches (which may have separate bank accounts or constitution such as the GAA, Foroige, Muintir na Tire or Macra na Feirme is it correct in understanding that they have only one vote in the County Plenary and in the Municipal District in which their county head office is based?

(b) Can their branches however also participate in linkage groups (without voting rights)?

(c) Also does a linkage group have to be established for the LCDC?

In an organisation such as the GAA which has a county board and many local clubs, the county board should register as the member of the PPN at a county level. Clubs should register as members in their own municipal districts. Only the county board would have a vote at the PPN county plenaries but the clubs could have a vote if there were votes held at a Municipal District level. However in the case of areas like Dublin where there is one GAA county Board and four local authorities, local clubs should register within their own MD, but would have only vote between all GAA clubs at Municipal Plenary level. When it comes to linkage groups, similarly the clubs in the municipal district would have only one vote but of course the PPN at municipal level may allow more than one person to attend from various organisations. In that case they still have only one vote when choosing representatives from the PPN to various county structures.

Also please refer to question 23 previously circulated regarding the establishment of a linkage group for LCDC.

41. Is it possible for a group to register with 2 or 3 PPN's? We received a registration form from a group with a postal address in a different Local Authority area?

Organisations can only register with PPNs where they or their local branches have a postal address at county or MD level. Therefore it is only possible for organisations with remits across a number of local authority areas to participate in a PPN where there is evidence of a postal address.

42. (a) National or regional organisations that do not have an address in the county are attempting to register on the basis that they undertake activity in the county. Should they be admitted?

(b) Some groups are nominating county councillors as their representatives. Should they be accepted? If so, how do we handle the situation in the event of such councillors being elected to be community representatives on council committees?

Please also refer to response above in Q 41.

Refer to Section 2.6.2 of the PPN guidelines where it clearly states elected representatives of local authorities cannot be nominated as a PPN representative on any decision making bodies within the local authority. Therefore if groups are nominating councillors as their representative on the PPN, they should be aware that this individual is unable to be nominated as PPN representative on any other bodies.

43. Can you advise if the reps that sit on the secretariat can also be the reps on the plenary who have been nominated to vote on behalf of the group? We have a few applications in from National bodies who have their office in Dublin and work in various locations within other counties from their Dublin office, where and how do these groups fit in and have their voice heard?

As outlined in section 2.2.1 of the guidelines the Plenary of each Municipal PPN nominates one person to the secretariat for the County/City PPN. A person may be a member of the Secretariat and represent their organisation in the PPN Plenary. However they are representing their municipal PPN and not their organisation on the secretariat. Please refer to response above for National Bodies representation.

44. We would appreciate clarification on the matter of validating a groups registration on the social inclusion electoral pillar, we have now frozen the PPN register in the County for the purpose of holding the initial meetings and electing the secretariat, we are examining the register at present and require advice on what groups are eligible for inclusion in the social inclusion pillar, FAQ 21 refers to guidance of criteria and validation in relation to the social inclusion and C&V pillars, to allow us to proceed to holding the initial plenary meetings we need to finalise the register at this stage.

The DELCG will be issuing a central communication soon on this to Local Authorities, but in the meantime you can refer to the working definition of social inclusion in Q21 of the FAQ as there will be no significant change to this in the finalised version. 'Social inclusion organisation is an organisation whose main activity centres on working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

45. When pillars are choosing their secretariat representatives at the first plenary meeting, do those candidates who put themselves forward have to be the named representative of their organisation, or is it open to all members of registered organisations.

Each college can nominate an equal number of representatives with a minimum of 2 from each college on the secretariat, therefore where possible the representatives from each

college should be the named representative of an organisation in the PPN in order to facilitate a smooth selection process and ensure a clear robust two way flow of communication.

46. (a) We note that Question 26 asks if a County Group/Network can join the County PPN directly or must the Group register with a Municipal PPN and that the answer stated that County based groups must register with the Municipal District where their postal address is based. However, the answer to Question 40 states that, in relation to an organisation such as the GAA that the county board should register as the member of the PPN at a county level. There appears to be a contradiction between both answers – could you please clarify whether or not a County based group can register directly with the PPN at a county level?

(b) Furthermore, please confirm if the County Board of an organisation can be considered to be a voluntary organisation?

(a) Question 26 refers to organisations that exist as a county based structure only with no other membership groups and therefore should only be a member of the MD where they have a postal address. Whereas Q40 refers to organisations that have a county based structure and also membership groups that have separate legal entities in their own right that are also based in MDs. The response to Q40 is to avoid the issue where these county organisations and their member organisations have a significant vote at county level.

(b) County Boards of any organisations can be considered to be a voluntary organisation if they do not fit into the environmental or social inclusion pillar, please also refer to Questions 19 and 25.

47. How does the Chamber of Commerce fit in on this - do they qualify for inclusion for registration on the PPN.

Chamber of Commerce do not qualify for inclusion for registration on the PPN. According to the Guidelines for the establishment and operation of Local and Community Development

Committees, business/employer interest representation is not prescribed, but where such representation is considered necessary, the Department recommends that nominations should be sought centrally from the Business Pillar (Business Barry Peak 01-4004300 Policy Executive, Chambers Ireland, Newmount House, 22-24 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2). Again, local arrangements may be used where it is considered more appropriate to do so, but such arrangements should ensure that nominees are representative of all business/employer interests.

48. Under the Environmental Pillar and in particular regarding green schools, who should be the representative from these schools to sit on the plenary?

To join the Environmental College under the PPN, an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. "Green 2 schools" are not environmental organisations as such and do not therefore qualify for this college.

49. Is there any date yet for the release of the Final Guidelines?

The Department are finalising the guidelines and will consult with the National Reference Group; however, it is not expected that there will be material or significant change in the finalised guidelines to those that issued under Circular Letter CSVP2 in May 2014. They are scheduled for completion by year-end.

50. There is one large community resource centre registered with the PPN and a number of clubs and groups that operate under this community resource centre have registered with the PPN separately – many of those registered are clubs and groups with no organisational structure that operate as services of this centre; in many cases when we rang the contact person of these smaller clubs, to confirm a few things, they did not know that they were even registered- what is the status of small clubs operating under a larger organisation in on defined area?

All organisations registered for the PPN should have an agreed set of rules and a working structure that informs the appropriate workings and structures for that organisation, which may differ across organisations. In most cases, this will likely be a constitution. To register with the PPN, all organisations must have a set of rules and a working structure. If they don't, they can't be registered in their own right and would be deemed to be part of the large organisation, which would have only one vote at meetings of the PPN.

51. Do you have a template of remit/ role for the Secretariat apart from co-ordinating and facilitating the implementation of decisions?

There are five roles outlined in section 2.4 of the guidelines.

52. What does the district and the county plenary discuss at their first meeting?

The first discussion at the district and county plenaries are a matter for the Local Authority but should reflect district and county issues respectively. It may however be a key occasion to clarify and confirm the new arrangements for all concerned.

The County/City Plenary and the Municipal District Plenary of the PPN will commence their work by going through a process to set out what they consider necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations. This process begins at Municipal District level. Such a statement may also be developed by other units of the PPN structure (e.g. Linkage Groups) if they wish to do so. This statement will act as a guiding vision statement for everything done by the group that drew up the statement e.g. choosing representatives, taking positions on issues, developing activities of any kind etc. Well-being statements should be reviewed by the PPN bi-annually.

53. According to the Guidelines “Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated.” What constitutes a conflict of interest? Community Transport is now a remit of the Local Authority. Is there a conflict of interest in this

instance? Would managers of Family Resource Centres or Volunteer Centres have a conflict of interest as they are paid employees?

There is no inherent conflict of interest in the examples cited above. However, it is important that the nominee understands that they are required to represent the PPN and are accountable to the PPN membership. They are not representing their own organisation.

54. Can you confirm the following regards FAQ Q23 Is a PPN required to set up 3 linkage groups for the LCDC namely Community & Voluntary LCDC Linkage Group, Social Inclusion LCDC Linkage Group and Environment LCDC Linkage Group or can the PPN set up one LCDC Linkage group whereat all 5 LCDC members can attend, report back to and receive direction from. Please clarify?

1. Each electoral college chooses its own reps on the LCDC - no linkage group is required.
2. The electoral college is the electing body - there is no need to set up a separate linkage group. Everyone in the college is entitled to vote in the election of the college's rep(s) on the LCDC.
3. The three electoral colleges are free to organise their discussions as they see fit within the PPN. I understand that in some cases they have organised themselves separately; in others they meet together. They could also have a combination of both of these options. It is up to themselves to arrange their interaction processes where the LCDC is concerned.

55. For organisations that wish to register to the PPN, is there a minimum membership and is the criteria set nationally?

There is no minimum membership for an organisation. The membership of an organisation is determined in their rules and working structure of the organisation. Specific detail on the national criteria for membership of the colleges is outlined in section 2.6.1 of guidelines.

56. The most recent FAQs contain a reference, in Q53, to “managers of Family Resource Centres”. The guidelines for LCDCs clearly state that Family Resource Centres are

considered to be “Local Development and Community Bodies” and not part of the Community and Voluntary sector. On this basis, should FRCs (and CDPs) be allowed to register for PPNs?

Family Resource Centres (and CDP's) are not eligible to register for the PPN as they are considered to be local development and community bodies.

57. (a) Is there an issue with paid staff of organisations who support community & voluntary/ social inclusion groups being nominated on to the PPN for that particular group they are working with?

(b) When it comes to organisations who support more than one voluntary group does each group get to register at MD level and have a vote or is it just one vote for that organisation no matter if the groups they support deal with completely different issues i.e. Lone parents, Unemployed, Integration, women in politics etc?

(a) The PPN guidelines do not exclude paid staff of C&V, social inclusion and/or environmental Organisations from participating on the PPN.

(b) Reference Q50 in the FAQ's. To register with the PPN, all organisations must have a set of rules and a working structure. If they don't, they can't be registered in their own right and would be deemed to be part of the large organisation, which would have only one vote at meetings of the PPN.

58. (a) We have received a query from a local Sports Partnership, asking if they can join the Public Participation Network - is it suitable for them to join?

(b) We have received an application from a Partnership Company to join the Public Participation Network. They have ticked each of the Sectors: Environment/Voluntary/ Social Inclusion. Is it in order to register them and if so which sector should we record them or can we select all three?

(c) Can you advise if we should be setting up linkage groups for nominations of environmental reps onto the SPC's or do we seek the nominations from the National Environmental Pillar?

- (a) The Sports Partnership is not eligible to register for the PPN as it is considered to be a local development and community body.
- (b) The Local Development Companies are not eligible to join the PPN as they are considered to be local development and community bodies.
- (c) Under the Guidelines, linkage groups should be established for all nominations to SPC's, including environmental reps for SPCs. The linkage group is made up of all interested organisations across the PPN. The Linkage Group nominates the representative to sit on the relevant SPC. In the case of an Environmental nominee, they must be from an organisation registered under the Environmental College and the nominee must be validated at the national level by the Environmental Pillar.

59. Can the same person serve on multiple committees, if duly elected? e.g. can the one person be a rep on the JPC and on an SPC?

The PPN is about maximising Public Participation, therefore the ideal is that there would be different reps on each LA structure and this would be the recommended approach. However, there may be instances where there is a limited pool of reps with the appropriate experience and knowledge required to fill rep roles on some structures and in these cases the PPN will need to be flexible.

60. We have a PPN application from 'Comhairle na nÓg' c/o Youth Work Ireland. They wish to nominate a young person between 12 and 18 years of age to be accompanied by an adult if necessary for the County Plenary? Is this possible?

The inclusion of young people in the PPN and in the County Plenary as suggested would be a positive development for the young people's agenda.

61. (a) Can a member of the PPN sit on both the Secretariat and on any other Committee, e.g. the LCDC or an SPC?

(b) When electing Members on to various Committees of the Council, what process is to be followed if the election results in a tie? For example, if every group nominates someone and everyone votes for their own candidate or with fewer candidates, when the election simply results in a tie?

(c) Do Linkage Groups include everyone from the appropriate college or only those interested in a specific issue? For example, when a Member of the PPN is being appointed to the Housing and Community SPC, only some groups from appropriate colleges may put forward a representative. Does the Linkage Group consist of only those groups who put forward a representative or the whole college?

(d) If a county umbrella body of an organisation doesn't register with the PPN, e.g. the GAA County Board, do the individual GAA Clubs then have a vote each at county level? If not, and if there is only one vote at county level, how is it to be decided who gets that vote?

(e) Should the PPN be reporting to another committee, e.g. the LCDC?

(a) Yes; it is important to note the aim of the structures and processes is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system. To achieve the diverse range of views it would be important to allocate roles to as many different members as possible.

(b) A couple of variations have been used to date in Local Authorities:

- A list of members nominated for a position is circulated to the plenary and member organisations are asked to preference their votes from 1 to the total number of candidates. If you have a tie following a count of first preference votes you move on to counting second preference votes.
- A scoring system could be used. On the ballot paper each organisation can allocate a score of 12 to the top candidate, 10 points to their second option and so on. The candidate with the highest score would be elected.

- (c) As per section 2.5 of the PPN guidelines all those organisations with an interest/involvement in the issue(s) being addressed by the particular body or, in the case of places representing particular interests of communities, can participate in the linkage group. The linkage group members can come from any/all of the three colleges.
- (d) County wide bodies such as the GAA county board should be encouraged to register as a member of the PPN at county level in order to secure the one vote at that level. In the situation of the county wide body not registering the individual clubs etc. do not have an individual vote. It is up to those individual organisations to decide between them how to organise that one vote at county level, taking account of the rules etc. of the county wide organisation.
- (e) No, the PPN reports to its constituent community groups/the wider public. The PPN is not required to report formally to the LCDC however the elected representatives from the PPN can agree at committee level the appropriate mechanisms for feeding back members views to the committee.

62. It is our understanding that membership of a Linkage Group will be county plenary representatives of interested groups and no others. In other words just one person per group. Is this correct?

No; anyone who has an interest in an issue can be a member of a linkage group; however, where voting on issues takes place, each organisation has one vote.

63. A query was raised at one of our workshops to establish the PPN: Are community enterprise groups and small business interest groups and SMEs eligible under any of the 3 pillars for membership of the PPN?

Community Enterprise organisations that are based on a social enterprise model where income generated is put back into the community service and are managed by a community based voluntary board of management can be considered for any of the 3 colleges

depending on the primary focus of their work. However, small business interest groups and SMEs would be considered to be part of the business sector and therefore not eligible for the PNN.

64. We have a number of nominees who represent a number of groups e.g. one person who represents 19 different groups in the county. It is our intention to allow this person 19 votes i.e. one group, one vote. How do you manage when one person represents groups in two different Municipal Districts? Does the person self-select which Municipal District they join for the election? We will be running elections for the MD's simultaneously and therefore one person cannot physically be in two different MD's.

The same question applies to the Colleges. One person is nominated to represent groups in both the Community Development and the Social Inclusion College. Does the person select which college they sit on for voting purposes therefore making them choose? We will be running the college elections simultaneously also.

Please refer to question and response to Q28 and Q59 in FAQs. The overall vision of the PPN is to maximise public participation and therefore as previously stated in Q28, the DECLG would have concerns where a single person is representing a number of organisations. This would give an unfair advantage to an individual in seeking nomination to the secretariat and other bodies/committees. The person wishing to represent two different Municipal Districts should be asked to select one MD and similarly any individual nominated for more than one college should be asked to select one college only.

65. The PPN guidelines outline criteria to guide choosing of PPN representatives to 'any bodies'. Does generic criteria apply to the Secretariat or solely to the external bodies that the PPN are nominated onto?

The criteria to guide choosing PPN representatives in section 2.6.2 apply for representation on bodies external to the PPN. The secretariat does not have a representational role.

66. Will there be a national PPN logo or does each plenary do its own thing?

There are no plans to develop a national Logo for PPNs; local areas are free to develop their own, if they so wish.

67. A Local Authority PPN are wondering if there are any further guidelines coming out shortly in relation to the PPN and particularly in regard to a Constitution/Operating Principles? The feeling of the Local Authority PPN is that they don't want to put time into developing a Constitution if there is a common one coming from the Department soon.

The PPN guidelines are scheduled to be finalised by end of 2014 and issued in January 2015. As indicated in a previous question Q49 there will be no significant change to the guidelines, which will not be overly prescriptive by including additional items on a constitution/operational principles for the PPN than those already outlined across the different elements of the PPN.