



Kildare Public Participation Network Secretariat Terms of Reference

TO BE REVIEWED IN NOVEMBER 2018

1. Background & Overview of the PPN

The Working Group on Citizen Engagement was established by Government in September 2013 with the aim of ensuring more extensive and diverse input by citizens into local government. The Group recommended that a *“Public Participation Network” be established in each local authority area to enable the public to take an active formal role in relevant policy making and committees of the Local Authority*”. In response to this, PPNs were established in each local authority area under Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. PPNs are the recognised link through which the Council connects with the community & voluntary, social inclusion & environmental sectors.

2. Role of the PPN

The role of the PPN is to:

- a) Identify issues of collective concern and work to influence local policy relating to these
- b) Feed a broad range of ideas, experiences, suggestions and proposals into Local Authority policies and plans
- c) Facilitate the selection of representatives from the community & voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors onto Council policy-making bodies
- d) Facilitate opportunities for networking and information sharing between the Council and PPN member organisations, as well as other agencies/organisations.
- e) Actively support and facilitate the inclusion of socially excluded groups and communities experiencing high levels of disadvantage, discrimination & inequality
- f) Develop a vision for the well-being of present and future generations.

3. Structure of the Secretariat

3.1 There are 11 members elected to the Secretariat, comprising:

- 1 representative from each of the 5 Municipal Districts
- 2 representatives from each of the 3 Electoral Colleges

3.2 All members on the Secretariat have equal status.

- 3.3 Sub-groups of the Secretariat are established, as required, to oversee agreed areas of business.
- Terms of Reference for sub-groups are developed, as appropriate, by the Secretariat
 - Sub-groups have no decision-making powers and are required to make recommendations to the Secretariat on all matters

4. Role of the Secretariat

The role of the Secretariat is to:

- a) Implement of decisions of the PPN plenary in relation to strategic, policy and budgetary matters
- b) Undertake operational, administrative and procedural tasks to ensure the proper functioning of the PPN
- c) Prepare draft documentation (such as budgets, work plan, policies, procedures) for review and approval by the PPN plenary
- d) Communicate extensively and regularly with all PPN members and disseminate information concerning PPN activities as widely as possible
- e) Work closely with PPN staff to support them to deliver PPN objectives
- f) Review and sign-off on all progress / finance reports to the Department (by email if required to facilitate tight reporting timeframes)
- g) Ensure that PPN representatives represent the views, interests and priorities of their Linkage Group/Municipal District/Electoral College and not those of their own group/organisation.

5. Role of the Chairperson / Facilitator (& Vice)

5.1 The Secretariat has a Chairperson / Facilitator who is appointed to conduct meetings and to facilitate communication with the Co-ordinator

5.2 The role of the Chairperson / Facilitator is to:

- actively chair or facilitate meetings
- sign relevant documentation on behalf of Secretariat
- support the Coordinator in fulfilling his/her role

5.3 The role of the Chairperson/Facilitator

- rotates annually, as agreed by consensus

- is alternated to ensure a gender/geographic/representative balance within the role
- 5.4 On an annual basis, in October, the Secretariat determines if the role is to be that of Chairperson or Facilitator for the year ahead
- 5.5 The Chairperson / Facilitator is not the sole or main representative of the Secretariat, as all Secretariat members have equal representative status
- 5.6 In urgent situations, the Chairperson / Facilitator assumes the role of Secretariat spokesperson. In all other situations, the Secretariat will formulate a collective PPN response at a Secretariat meeting to issues that arise
- 5.7 The Secretariat has a vice Chairperson / Facilitator who acts in the Chairperson's / Facilitator's absence. Where both are absent, the Secretariat will appoint a temporary Chairperson / Facilitator for the duration of the absence

6. Meeting Agenda

- 6.1 At least seven working days in advance of Secretariat meetings, the Co-ordinator emails all Secretariat members to request items for consideration for the meeting agenda. Items must be submitted by Secretariat members in writing to the Coordinator at least 72 hours thereafter. Items submitted after this time will not be considered for inclusion on the agenda
- 6.2 PPN member organisations (MOs) are entitled to submit items for consideration for the agenda, in writing to the Coordinator within four working days of the meeting. MOs are notified of this entitlement on the PPN website or through other mechanisms, as agreed by the Secretariat
- 6.3 A draft agenda is formulated jointly by the Co-ordinator and Chairperson / Facilitator having regard to the items submitted by Secretariat members and MOs. Where a decision is taken not to include a requested item on an agenda, the reasons will be notified in writing by the Chairperson / Facilitator to all Secretariat members, and to MOs where relevant.
- 6.4 The draft agenda is circulated by the Co-ordinator to the Secretariat at least three working days in advance of Secretariat meetings.
- 6.5 The agenda is agreed at the start of each meeting. The standard agenda is:
- Apologies
 - Adopting the Agenda
 - Minutes and Matters Arising
 - Correspondence

- Policy and Decision Influencing Issues
- Reports and Updates
 - Secretariat Sub-Committees
- Finance
- AOB

- 6.6 In the absence of consensus on the agenda, the final agenda will be agreed at the meeting by majority vote, with the Chairperson / Facilitator having the casting vote
- 6.7 Where an urgent agenda item arises, the decision to include it on the agenda will be taken at the start of the meeting by majority vote, with the Chairperson/Facilitator having the casting vote
- 6.8 Where a Secretariat member or MO has a requested item included on the agenda, he/she must submit a short briefing paper on the item to ensure that all Secretariat members are adequately and equitably briefed on the issue and that a well-informed discussion and decision can occur. The briefing paper must be circulated with the meeting agenda three days in advance of the meeting. In the event that the Secretariat member does not attend the meeting, the issue will be held over until the next meeting, unless otherwise decided by the Secretariat

7. Minutes

- 7.1 Minutes are taken by the Co-ordinator or, as required, by a nominated Secretariat member on a rotating basis, using an agreed template
- 7.2 Draft minutes will be circulated to Secretariat members within 10 working days of the Secretariat meeting
- 7.3 Minutes are proposed and seconded at meetings
- 7.4 Minutes reflect decisions taken, actions agreed, and a brief synopsis of the discussion.
- 7.5 Minutes are published on the PPN website within 10 days of their adoption by the Secretariat. Where sensitive matters are discussed, the minutes will record the discussion appropriately.
- 7.6 An action log will be prepared for each meeting, clearly indicating the action, person responsible and timeframe for each action. The action log is not published with the minutes on the PPN website.

8. Decision-Making

- 8.1 The ruling body of the PPN is the Plenary. As such, the Secretariat's decision-making functions relates only to operational, administrative and procedural matters. In this regard, the following applies:
- Decisions are made by consensus where possible, or otherwise by majority vote

- The Chairperson / Facilitator has the casting vote
- No proxy voting is allowed
- Secretariat members are expected to respect and adhere to all decisions made at meetings

8.2 The Secretariat facilitates the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary in relation to strategic, policy and budgetary matters

8.3 Decisions cannot be made outside of meetings, except in urgent / exceptional circumstances. In such cases, the Chairperson / Facilitator will communicate with all Secretariat members by email to brief them on the issue and reach an agreed, transparent decision in writing

9. Secretariat Meetings

9.1 Location and Timing

- a) Meetings can be held in Council offices or other venues, as agreed by consensus
- b) Meeting venues and locations will be decided based on accessibility and cost considerations
- c) Meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of every month, 7pm – 9pm

9.2 Meeting Refreshments

- a) Where relevant, refreshments are provided at meetings. There is reasonable regard for dietary requirements and budgetary restrictions. Refreshments do not include alcoholic beverages

9.3 Meeting Expenses

- a) Expenses are accrued by Secretariat members at public service rates and are applied on the basis of kilometres travelled to meetings. Fuel receipts are not accepted
- b) Where possible and practicable, public transport should be used for longer journeys
- c) Claim forms are completed quarterly and submitted to the Co-ordinator, who cross-references claims with meeting attendance records
- d) Claim forms are signed off by the Coordinator and counter signed by a Secretariat member at the next available Secretariat meeting. A Secretariat member cannot sign his/her own expenses form
- e) Subsistence is not payable for any meetings held in Co. Kildare

- f) Subsistence for meetings outside Co. Kildare is based on Local Authority subsistence rates, subject to budgetary review after 12 months

9.4 Frequency of Meetings

- a) A minimum of 10 Secretariat meetings will be held per year and will be scheduled monthly, as outlined above in 9.1c

9.5 Meeting Attendance

- a) If a member does not attend three or more consecutive meetings, and/or attends less than two-thirds of meetings annually, he/she will be asked to consider their position on the Secretariat
- b) Secretariat members are also required to participate in PPN training and support programmes, as identified
- c) Reasonable notified lengthy absences (e.g. due to ill health or family commitment) is considered on a case-by-case basis by the Secretariat

9.6 Quorum

- a) A Secretariat meeting is deemed to have a quorum when attendance of Secretariat members includes one-third plus one of the filled seats
- b) In situations where a member has notified the Secretariat of a lengthy absence (see 9.5c), or that all seats are not filled, the quorum is reduced to reflect this

10. Membership

10.1 Nominations & Elections

- a) Members are nominated by a member organisation, and are selected through an open and transparent election process
- b) In the event that a nomination is no longer valid (e.g. the nominating body ceases to exist or the member no longer represents it), then the member is deemed to have resigned and an election is held to fill the vacant seat
- a) Elections can be held at any time in response to a vacant position, within three months of the seat becoming vacant, by election from relevant Sector / Municipal District
- c) Elections are held through postal votes of all relevant members

10.2 Term

- a) Membership of the Secretariat is for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 5 years (i.e: the term of the Council)
- b) Members will step down on a phased basis in order to ensure continuity of the PPN's programme of work
- c) In order to support a diverse and inclusive membership, members cannot seek re-election to the Secretariat within a minimum of two years of stepping down

10.3 Resignation

- a) Resignations from the Secretariat must be given in writing (by letter or email) to the Coordinator
- b) Where possible, exit interviews are carried out with the members vacating their seat

10.4 Gender

- a) There is a commitment to equality, non-discrimination and strive for gender balance in terms of Secretariat membership.

10.5 Code of Conduct

- a) Secretariat members are expected to act in accordance with the tenets of the PPN. If a member brings the Secretariat or the PPN into disrepute, undermines it or does not comply with its Terms of Reference or other protocols, he/she may be asked to step down from the Secretariat. This will be done in line with the PPN's agreed disciplinary procedures.
- b) Secretariat members are required to work in the best interest of Kildare PPN, rather than in the interest of their Municipal District, Sector or Nominating Body.
- c) Secretariat members are required to comply with the PPN Code of Conduct