

Kildare Public Participation Network Constitution

Introduction

The Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in 2014 as the representative voice for all Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups.

The Public Participation Network will identify the issues that matter and try to influence policy in a way that improves the quality of life and opportunities for people within the Local Authority area.

Membership of the Public Participation Network is open to all community and voluntary groups, clubs and organisations, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community.

The Public Participation Network is overseen by a Secretariat, elected by full member groups of the network.

The Public Participation Network elects representatives to committees and organisations to speak on behalf of all member groups of the network.

The Public Participation Network is the main link through which the Local Authority and other decision-making bodies connect with the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors.

The Public Participation Network is committed to working in an open, inclusive and transparent manner on behalf of all member groups.

Kildare Public Participation Network

1. NAME

The Public Participation Network for County Kildare will be known as the Kildare Public Participation Network (Kildare PPN) as defined by Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

Kildare Public Participation Network is the collective voice for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in Kildare, its purpose is to improve people's well-being by involving the community in local decision-making.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF KILDARE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

The aims and objectives are as follows:

- 3.1 To provide an open, inclusive and transparent representative structure for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in Kildare.
- 3.2 To support the member groups of Kildare Public Participation Network so that they can:
 - Develop their capacity to do their work more effectively.
 - Participate effectively in PPN activities.
 - Be included and their voices and concerns are heard.

- 3.3 To support and encourage a process that will feed a broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals from PPN member groups into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers at all levels.
- 3.4 To facilitate and support the representation of the Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors on the Local Community Development Committee, the Strategic Policy Committees, the Joint Policing Committee, other local government and local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international body deemed appropriate by the Kildare PPN.
- 3.5 To contribute to the development and achievement of a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.
- 3.6 To promote Kildare Public Participation Network and its aims and objectives.
- 3.7 To develop and promote the Public Participation Network so that the work of the PPN is clearly recognised, acknowledged and understood by local decision-making bodies including Kildare County Council, ensuring the PPN has a strong community voice.

4. PRINCIPLES OF KILDARE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

Kildare Public Participation Network and its member organisations are committed to the following principles and practices:

- 4.1 Implementing and abiding by best practice governance structures.
- 4.2 Non-sectarian and non-party political.
- 4.3 It does not discriminate on the grounds outlined in the The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018.
- 4.4 Working with a community development approach to address issues of all our member groups, promoting equality, social inclusion, and achievement of human rights and the protection of the environment.
- 4.5 Maintaining open, inclusive and transparent organisational structures.
- 4.6 Acting as a vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies reflecting the diversity and range of views of member groups.
- 4.7 Working in a collective and supportive way with all member groups.
- 4.8 Act as a catalyst to influence the sustainable development of County Kildare.
- 4.9 To develop the Kildare PPN as a resource for the community, voluntary social inclusion and environmental sectors and communities in County Kildare.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF KILDARE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

Membership of Kildare Public Participation Network is open to all groups and organisations active in County Kildare that fulfil the criteria outlined below.

Kildare Public Participation Network is made up of full member groups and associate member groups.

Criteria for Membership

- 5.1 Member organisations must elect to be a member of one of the three Electoral Colleges: Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary, or Environmental. Groups joining the Environmental College must be approved by the Irish Environmental Network.
- 5.2 Member organisations must have 3 or more members, and be open to new members.
- 5.3 Member organisations must have an appropriate governance structure e.g. set of rules / constitution / financial procedures.
- 5.4 Member Organisations must agree with the aims, objectives and principles set out in Sections 3 and 4.
- 5.5 Member organisations must be independent, with a committee or board (not a substructure or subcommittee).
- 5.6 Member Organisations must carry out their activities in an open and transparent manner.
- 5.7 Member Organisations must have a base in and/or be active in Kildare.
- 5.8 Member organisations must be a minimum of six months in existence.
- 5.9 Organisations, which at the time of application, meet all other criteria except some element(s) of sections 5.7 and/or 5.8 may apply for Associate Membership.
- 5.10 Associate Member Organisations do not have the power to make nominations, or have voting rights, however they can put forward motions.
- 5.11 An organisation's membership of the PPN may be reviewed by the Kildare Public Participation Network Secretariat if at any time the organisation claims to speak on behalf of/or represent the PPN without mandate.
- 5.12 A member organisation shall cease to be a member of the PPN if the organisation no longer qualifies under the conditions laid down for membership.
- 5.13 The following process will be used for expulsion of members:
 - The proposal to expel will be placed on the agenda for the next Plenary meeting of the Kildare PPN, and the Registered Member Group concerned will be notified of the intention to raise the matter at least one month before the meeting at which the expulsion is to be considered. The Registered Member Group will be given an opportunity to address the issue at the Kildare PPN Plenary meeting.
 - The expulsion will be effective if passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present at the Plenary meeting.
 - If a proposal to expel an organisation is received, and it is not appropriate to wait for a Plenary meeting, the Secretariat will have the authority to expel an organisation as long as two thirds majority are present at the Secretariat meeting. This action must be brought forward at the next Plenary for ratification.

The Director of Economic, Community & Cultural Development in Kildare County Council and his/her nominees shall support the operation of Kildare Public Participation Network, and may attend (with seven days' notice) PPN meetings and contribute to discussions, however they shall not have voting rights.

6. PLENARY MEETINGS

The Plenary (all the member organisations together) is the key decision maker of the PPN on operational issues, meeting twice a year (one meeting must be the AGM).

- 6.1 Each Kildare PPN Member Organisation may elect one person to represent them on the Plenary.
- 6.2 Member Organisations must be given at least 21 days' notice of a Plenary Meeting.
- 6.3 The Agenda for the meeting will be issued to member organisation 7 days in advance.
- 6.4 Notice of a Plenary Meeting should include:
 - Minutes of the previous Plenary.
 - Details of any elections that will be taking place.
 - Documents for ratification.
- 6.5 The quorum for a Plenary Meeting shall be 15 full member groups (i.e. a minimum of 15 persons representing 15 separate Full Member Organisations) and a minimum of four members of the Secretariat.
- 6.6 It will be the aim of Kildare PPN to arrive at decisions by consensus. However, where consensus cannot be achieved, a decision to be carried will require the support of two-thirds of the members present at the meeting. Voting will be on the basis of one organisation one vote, with one delegate entitled to vote on behalf of each member.
- 6.7 Kildare PPN Secretariat may invite guests to attend Plenary meetings.
- 6.8 An Extraordinary Plenary Meeting (EPM) may be called by the Secretariat or by notice in writing by 20 Full Member Organisations. At least 14 days' notice shall be given of an Extraordinary Plenary and the notice must contain a specification of the business to be discussed at the meeting.
- 6.9 Vacancies that arise will be ratified at Plenary meetings with the replacements being drawn from the electoral pillar in which the vacancy arose.
- 6.10 As the Public Participation Network develops, Plenary meetings will be arranged at a Municipal District level. The notice period for a Municipal District Plenary shall be the same, however the quorum shall be 6 full members (i.e. a minimum of 6 persons representing 6 separate Full Member Organisations).

7. LINKAGE GROUPS

Linkage Groups will be established to support the work of Kildare PPN and Representatives of Kildare PPN on decision making committees at local authority and community level. It is important to note that the role of the Linkage Group is to facilitate and enable organisations to voice a wide range of views and interests within the local Government system. It is intended to add to the participation of member groups, not replace or reduce it in any way.

- 7.1 All the Linkage Groups are open to any member of organisations/groups registered with Kildare

PPN regardless of the sectoral interest of the member's group or the Linkage Group.

- 7.2 Linkage Groups may invite non-members of Kildare PPN to participate in an advisory role.
- 7.3 Linkage Groups will meet as often as they determine but at least twice per year.
- 7.4 Kildare PPN representatives will be required to be members of and attend Linkage Group meetings appropriate to their representation.
- 7.5 At the first meeting, the Linkage Group members will select a Facilitator. The Facilitator will then be responsible for convening meetings of the Linkage Groups (this should not be the PPN Representative). The Linkage Group Facilitator where possible will be a member of the Kildare PPN Secretariat.
- 7.6 Linkage Groups will issue a report of meetings to the Kildare PPN Administrator/Coordinator.

8. SECRETARIAT

Kildare Public Participation Network will be overseen by a Secretariat of 11 members, ratified by full member organisations at a Plenary meeting. Two members will be elected from each of the three Electoral Pillars and the remaining five members, one each from the five Municipal Districts. Consideration should be given towards achieving gender balance. The Secretariat is a flat structure (i.e. there are not elected officers). Meetings will be chaired on a rotational basis.

The purpose of the Secretariat will be:

- 8.1 To ensure the aims and objectives of the Kildare Public Participation Network are met.
- 8.2 To ensure that member groups are informed of developments relevant to their groups.
- 8.3 To represent member group' interests.
- 8.4 To ensure the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenary meetings.
- 8.5 To facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary.
- 8.6 To support the Resource Worker to achieve the PPN's objectives through the implantation of the Annual Workplan.
- 8.7 To develop Kildare Public Participation Network into an effective collective voice for community groups in Kildare.
- 8.8 To engage with and support the PPN Representatives.
- 8.9 To operate as defined under Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.
- 8.10 The Secretariat may establish working-groups, subcommittees or task-groups if necessary.

9. SECRETARIAT MEETINGS

- 9.1 The Secretariat will meet every two months or as deemed necessary.
- 9.2 The quorum for Secretariat meetings is half or more of the current members.
- 9.3 If after 30 minutes from the scheduled starting time, a quorum is not present the meeting shall

stand adjourned to a date to be determined by the Secretariat.

- 9.4 If at an adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within 30 minutes from the appointed start time, the members present shall be a quorum.
- 9.5 The Secretariat will strive to make decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, those present will make decisions by way of a simple majority vote.
- 9.6 In the event of a majority vote not being reached, the Chair will have the deciding vote.
- 9.7 Where possible all reports given at Secretariat meetings and general meetings should be written and circulated in advance.
- 9.8 The appropriate method of reporting for some meetings may be verbal.

10. REPRESENTATIVES – CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Kildare Public Participation Network elects representatives to sit on committees and organisations on behalf of all member organisations of the network. To be eligible for election as a representative of Kildare Public Participation Network a person must be:

- 10.1 An active member of a Kildare Public Participation Network Full Member Organisation.
- 10.2 Nominated by their Member Organisation.
- 10.3 Committed to the aims, objectives and principles of Kildare Public Participation Network.
- 10.4 Willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant body that he/she is to sit on.
- 10.5 Willing to be representative of all member organisations of Kildare Public Participation Network, effectively acting in the interest of the PPN as a whole.
- 10.6 Willing to uphold, support and defend the policies, decisions and position of Kildare Public Participation Network.
- 10.7 Able to articulate, discuss, debate and negotiate on behalf of Kildare Public Participation Network.
- 10.8 Readily contactable by other member organisations.
- 10.9 Representatives of Kildare Public Participation Network will seek to:
 - Promote understanding of the issues and difficulties facing the community sector.
 - Present the views and policies of Kildare Public Participation Network to the meeting and ensure that they are taken into account in the decision-making process.
 - Bring issues of relevance to the community sector back to Kildare Public Participation Network for the information of all groups in the form of a written report.
 - Advise Kildare Public Participation Network of issues which require a response, formulation of policy or other action.
 - Receive instruction from Kildare Public Participation Network (through a Linkage Group/ Thematic Network, Plenary meetings, or the Secretariat) as to how the PPN should be

represented.

- Attend Kildare Public Participation Network Plenary Meetings, relevant Linkage Groups meetings and joint meetings between the Secretariat and PPN representatives.

11. CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE SECRETARIAT MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESIGN THEIR POSITION

11.1 Secretariat Members and Representatives would be required to resign their position if they:

- Are no longer a member of the Kildare Public Participation Network Member Organisation that nominated them.
- No longer have the formal support of their nominating Member Organisation.
- Fail to attend three consecutive meetings of the Secretariat and/or committees they were elected to without reasonable explanation.
- If they do not abide by the Kildare PPN Code of Conduct.
- Declare as a candidate for local, general or European elections.

12. ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS AND VOTING

12.1 Nominations for Kildare Public Participation Network representative roles and seats on the Secretariat shall be invited through electronic communication with member groups.

12.2 Voting is streamed according to electoral pillar or Municipal District.

12.3 When the number of nominations received exceeds the number of seats available a ballot will take place.

12.4 Each Full Member Organisation shall be entitled to one vote only and must have a representative assigned to cast that vote.

12.5 Individuals can only represent and vote on behalf of one Full Member Organisation at any Plenary meeting.

13. ELECTIONS TO THE SECRETARIAT

There are 11 seats on the Secretariat, which must be filled as follows:

13.1 Full Member Organisations from each of the municipal districts of the Local Authority area elects a representative from their area (the municipal districts in Kildare are Clane-Maynooth, Newbridge-Kildare, Naas, Athy and Leixlip-Celbridge).

13.2 Full Member Organisations from each of three electoral colleges: Community and Voluntary; Environmental and Social Inclusion elects two representatives.

13.3 Election is for a maximum term of six years (the Plenary may decide on a shorter term).

13.4 Kildare Public Participation Network will strive to achieve a gender balance on the Secretariat.

13.5 To help prevent loss of all experience from the group at one time, elections to the Secretariat must be staggered in line with Section 6 of the PPN Handbook.

13.6 Members of the Secretariat who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no

person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms on the Secretariat.

13.7 The PPNs must separate the election cycle for the Secretariat from the local election cycle for Councillors, to ensure that an experienced Secretariat is in place when there is a need to elect new representatives to Local Authority Boards and Committees.

13.8 Should a member of the Secretariat be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, full member groups of the relevant Municipal District or College will be contacted seeking nominations for a new representative.

14. ELECTION OF PPN REPRESENTATIVES

14.1 The criteria for and responsibilities of representatives of Kildare Public Participation Network are set out in Section 10.

14.2 Nominations for vacant positions on structures on which Kildare PPN is represented will be sought from Kildare PPN membership from the appropriate College/MD.

14.3 A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local, national or European) should not be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office. Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated.

14.4 Representatives of Kildare Public Participation Network will be ratified at the next Plenary.

14.5 Election is for a maximum term of 5 years (subject to change).

14.6 Members of the Secretariat of Kildare Public Participation Network may be elected to a representative role.

14.7 Representatives of Kildare Public Participation Network who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same role.

14.8 It is preferable that a person would hold only one PPN representative role.

15. DESELECTION OF PPN REPRESENTATIVES / SECRETARIAT MEMBERS

15.1 In the event of a Representative/Secretariat member who represents the Kildare PPN, failing to carry out his/ her duties in an appropriate manner, as outlined in Section 10 and Section 8, the Kildare PPN may deselect a Representative/Secretariat member in the following manner:

A proposal to deselect a representative may be made by:

- A majority vote of the Kildare PPN Secretariat or
- A simple majority of delegates at a Kildare PPN Plenary meeting.

15.2 The proposal to deselect will be placed on the agenda for the next Secretariat Meeting of Kildare PPN, and the Representative/Secretariat member concerned will be notified of the intention to raise the matter at least two weeks before the meeting at which the deselection is to be considered. The Representative/Secretariat member will be given an opportunity to address the

issue at the Kildare PPN meeting.

15.3 Kildare PPN will ensure that due process will be adhered to as outlined in the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure.

16. FINANCES

16.1 Kildare Public Participation Network finances will be overseen and monitored by the Secretariat and will be hosted by Kildare County Council with an agreed Memorandum of Understanding and in line with their financial policy, however the Secretariat shall operate robust financial controls with regard to all income and expenditure.

16.2 True accounts shall be kept of all sums of money received and expended by the PPN and accounts will be made available to all members prior to the Plenary Meeting.

17. KEY NOTE

In order to progress the work of Kildare PPN, it must be acknowledged that the relationship between Kildare County Council, and its decision making committees is paramount to the success of the network. The PPN acknowledges that it is the primary conduit by which our member groups and communities will have their voices heard, hence positively impacting and influencing policy in a way that improves the quality of life and opportunities for people within Kildare.

18. AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

18.1 This Constitution has been developed by the PPN in consultation with its Member Groups and approved by the Plenary.

18.2 The Secretariat will ensure that a formal review of the Kildare Public Participation Network Constitution will take place at least every 3 years to ensure that it is consistent with this Handbook and all Departmental Circulars.

18.3 The Secretariat and Member Organisation may put forward a motion to amend the Constitution.

18.4 Member organisations wishing to put forward a motion to amend the Constitution, must do so in writing to the Secretariat at least 14 days in advance of the Plenary meeting.

18.5 Member Organisations must be informed of any motions to amend the Constitution at least 7 days in advance of a Plenary.

18.6 Motions to amend/review/change the Constitution will be voted on at a Plenary Meeting and shall require a two-thirds majority of Full Member groups present and entitled to vote.