DH —

Leitrim Public Participation Network

Líonra Rannpháirtíochta Poiblí Liatroma

Take Part - Make a Difference

Leitrim Public Participation Network

Draft Constitution 1

Adopted at a Plenary Meeting of the PPN on _____

Interim Adoption
By Secretariat : 15/12/17.
Unanimous

Code for Discussion of Document:

New items not discussed by committee

Changes made or approved by committee (where title is yellow, whole section has been approved/changed by committee)

Sections with no colour, are as per original Leitrim PPN constitution

Contents

1. Introduction

Leitrim Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in May 2014 as part of the Reform of Local Government Act 2014. It is an independent voice of all of the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups throughout County Leitrim.

2. Mission

To enable community groups in County Leitrim to influence policy at a local level

3. Aims

Leitrim PPN is committed to giving community groups in County Leitrim a voice at local level to influence decisions at county level. It aims to do this by:

3.1 Further developing Leitrim PPN so as to ensure the PPN's sustainability and its representation and support of the Social Inclusion, Environment and the Community and Voluntary Sectors in County Leitrim

3.2 Ensuring that PPN members groups, Representatives, Secretariat and Resource Worker are supported in order to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the PPN in County Leitrim

3.3 Enhancing communication and networking among PPN members, the wider community and Local Government structures

3.4 Inputting into the policy development process locally in County Leitrim, and in turn regionally and nationally

3.5 Ensuring the effective roll out of the PPN in County Leitrim

4. Values and Principles

Leitrim PPN will adhere to the following values and principles:

4.1 Implement and abide by good governance structures

4.2 Work in an inclusive, respectful, transparent and collaborative manner

4.3 Act as the vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies and plans being developed by local authorities, reflecting both areas of disagreement and, where there is no consensus, the range of views

4.4 Respect and value the diversity of groups and sectors involved in the PPN and their many different opinions and views

5. Objectives of Leitrim PPN

5.1 Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies

5.2 Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, community & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they live/participate

5.3 Provides information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received

Specifically, to ...

5.4 Contribute to the local authority's development of a vision for the wellbeing of this and future generations for County Leitrim

5.5 Facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority

5.6 Identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues

5.7 Actively support the inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same

5.8 Encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services

5.9 Facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors onto county decision making bodies

5.10 Support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the PPN into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the PPN

5.11 Work to develop the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the county

5.12 Support the individual members of the PPN so that they can develop their capacity, participate effectively in PPN activities so that their voices and concerns are heard

6. Criteria for Membership

6.1 Membership of Leitrim PPN is open to all community groups and organisations in County Leitrim who meet the following criteria:

6.2 Groups must be non-profit and operate within the community/voluntary, social inclusion or environmental sectors

6.3 Be active in County Leitrim with a postal address in one of the three Municipal Districts of Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon or Manorhamilton

6.4 Have more than five members

6.5 Have a written constitution, operating rules and procedures and/or memorandum and articles of association

6.6 Be in existence for at least six months

6.7 Be open to new members

6.8 Be independent with a committee or board and have a formal structure i.e. Chairperson, Secretary (i.e. not a subcommittee or sub structure)

6.9 Hold regular meetings and an AGM

6.10 Be non-party political, anti-sectarian and non-discriminatory

6.11 Employees/professionals where there is a conflict of interests cannot be nominated

6.12 Public representatives (Councillors, TD'S, Senators, MEP's) or those who have held such office within the past twelve months may not take a representative role in the PPN. In addition, individuals who are declared as candidates for public representation office must step aside from all PPN representative roles for the duration of their declared candidacy.

6.13 Groups and organisations should be able to establish their bona fides as a community or voluntary organisation and provide documentation in order to do so as requested.

6.14 Groups are required to renew their membership every year

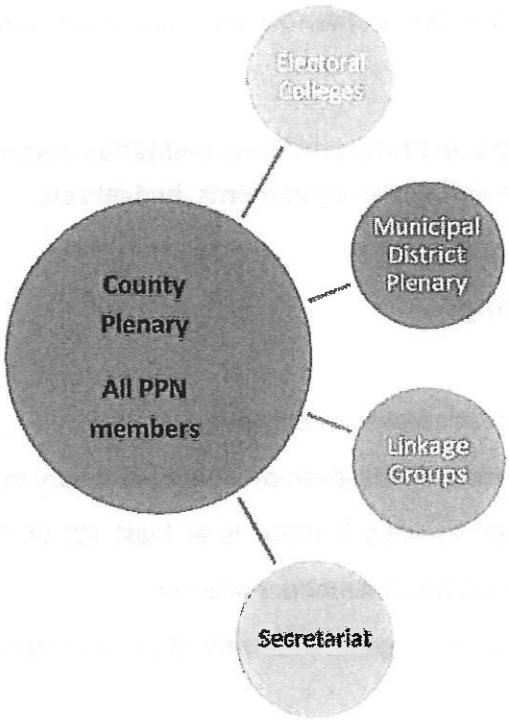
6.15 Leitrim PPN Secretariat will ratify new groups as members of the PPN and groups will then be added to the Leitrim PPN database of member groups.

6.16 In the event of a dispute regarding membership, Leitrim PPN Secretariat will invoke the disciplinary and appeals procedure

7. Structure of Leitrim PPN

7.1 Leitrim PPN will be made up of all registered member groups and organisations in the County and they will be the decision making authority for the PPN.

7.2 The PPN is made up of three interconnected structures, the County Plenary (all registered members), Municipal Plenary, Linkage Groups and Secretariat



8. County Plenary

8.1 The County Plenary is the ruling body of the PPN

8.2 The County Plenary is composed of all the registered members of Leitrim PPN

8.3 Any member of a registered group can attend a County Plenary Meeting

8.4 Each member group/organisation can nominate two representatives to vote on their behalf at a County Plenary Meeting – one main voting representative and one alternate. Every group/organisation will have one vote at County Plenary. In the instance of the main voting representative not being available to vote, the alternate will be able to vote in their place.

8.5 The County Plenary ratifies all aspects of the work of the PPN and delegates the administration of the PPN to the Secretariat.

8.6 The County Plenary is responsible for the election of PPN Representatives onto

8.7 The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Secretariat through the three electoral colleges.

8.8 The County Plenary ratifies the election of all other Representatives onto county committees.

8.9 The County Plenary adopts and ratifies all documentation pertaining to the work of the PPN e.g. work plans, service level agreements, budgets etc.

9. County Plenary Meetings

9.1 The County Plenary will meet at least twice a year.

9.2 A minimum of 21 days' notice will be given of a County Plenary meeting.

9.3 A meeting will be deemed as valid if there is at least 5% of the member groups present and a total of 3 Secretariat members present.

9.4 Attendance and minutes at meetings will be recorded. Minutes will be available on the PPN website.

9.5 Meetings will be facilitated by a person selected by the Secretariat.

9.6 Agenda items and motions for discussion must be forwarded at least 7 working days prior to the date of the meeting. These can be forwarded by any member group.

9.7 Decisions at County Plenary level can be made by majority vote

9.8 Representatives from the LCDC will report back at each meeting.

9.9 Guest speakers may be asked to attend meetings at the request of the Secretariat

10. Electoral Colleges

10.1 All members of the Plenary must opt to join one of the three Electoral Colleges:
- Environmental
- Social Inclusion
- Community and Voluntary

10.2 Membership of an electoral college will be in line with an organisations primary objective

10.3 To join the environment Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the Environmental Pillar at a national level.

10.4 To join the Social Inclusion Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion / social justice / equality.

10.5 Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Community and Voluntary Electoral College.

10.6 Each electoral college elects two people to represent them on the PPN Secretariat.

10.7 Each electoral college elect members to represent them on the County's Local Community Development Committee - 5 members are to be elected to the LCDC from the PPN (two from the Community and Voluntary College, two from the Social Inclusion College and one from the Environment College)

10.8 Electoral College Representatives will be guided by the Representatives Charter

10.9 When electoral college representatives fail to attend meetings or comply with the representatives Charter, the disciplinary and appeals procedure of the PPN can be invoked by the Secretariat

11. Municipal District Plenary

11.1 Groups registered with an address in each of the three municipal districts will be eligible to join the Municipal District Plenary.

11.2 Any member of a registered group/organisation in the municipal district can attend municipal district meetings

11.3 Each municipal district will elect one person to sit on the Secretariat

11.4 The Secretariat representative for each district is responsible for calling the meetings and for reporting back to the County Plenary from these meetings.

11.5 There will be at least one municipal district meeting every year.

11.6 County wide groups/organisations with several local branches e.g. GAA, Foroige, Macra na Feirme will register with the PPN at county level with their local branches registering as members in their own municipal districts.

11.7 All membership groups of the municipal district will have voting rights. Each group will nominate one person as the municipal district voting rep and one person will be identified as the alternate. One vote will be allocated to each member in each municipal district. In the instance of the municipal district voting rep not being available to attend, the municipal district alternate will be able to attend in their place and vote.

11.8 Groups in each Municipal District work together on agreed objectives and can work to influence policy locally or nationally in line with the principles and values of the PPN

11.9 All communications made by the municipal district should go first through the Secretariat, for their approval

11.10 Municipal District representatives will be guided by the Representatives Charter

11.11 When Municipal District representatives fail to attend meetings or comply with the representatives' Charter, the disciplinary and appeals procedure of the PPN can be invoked by the Secretariat

12. Linkage Group and Linkage Group Representatives

12.1 Linkage groups allow PPN members the opportunity to feed into decision making at a local level (through their elected representative)

12.2 Membership of a linkage group is open to all registered membership of Leitrim PPN

12.3 Linkage groups are established by the Secretariat, when a request for a representative is received

12.4 Linkage groups elect representatives onto county committees and enable discussion and debate between membership groups on topics of interest

12.5 The Linkage group and its elected representative(s) will be guided by the Representatives Charter

12.6 Linkage groups and Representatives engage in 2-way communication on matters

12.7 The representative feeds back to the linkage group and is accountable to them

12.8 The representative brings forward a diversity of views from the linkage group to the committee he/she is elected to

12.9 The linkage group and its representative report to the Plenary annually

12.10 Linkage groups can communicate on line or through face to face meetings

12.11 To call a meeting of a linkage group a request to do so should be made to the Secretariat

12.12 Groups in each Linkage group work together on agreed objectives and can work to influence policy locally or nationally in line with the principles and values of the PPN

12.13 All communications made by the linkage should go first through the Secretariat, for their approval

12.14 When representatives fail to attend meetings or comply with the representatives Charter, the disciplinary and appeals procedure of the PPN can be invoked by the Secretariat

13. Secretariat

The Secretariat shall ...

13.1 be made up of 9 members as elected by the County Plenary, these are

- One representative from each of the three municipal districts
- Two representatives from the Community and Voluntary sector
- Two representatives from the Social Inclusion sector
- Two representatives from the Environmental sector

13.2 Facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary

13.3 Ensure the proper functioning of the PPN in between Plenaries

13.4 Coordinate the activities of PPN

13.5 Communicate extensively and regularly with all PPN members and in this process disseminate information concerning all PPN activities as widely as possible

13.6 Manage the resource worker for the PPN to enable them in delivering their objectives

13.7 Develop, manage and oversee a work-plan for the PPN

13.8 Manage and monitor the PPN budget and present a financial report to the County Plenary annually

13.9 Ensure procedures for elections are adhered to, and invoke the disciplinary and appeals procedure if necessary

13.10 Facilitate the setting up and development of Linkage Groups

13.11 Maintain a database and contact details of membership groups

13.12 Establish a finance subgroup, PR subgroup and other subgroups as necessary

13.13 The Secretariat will remain in place for a period of 5 years

13.14 Elections to the Secretariat will take place every 5 years, where all members of the Secretariat will retire their seats. A retiring Secretariat member, shall be eligible for re-election.

14. Secretariat Meetings

14.1 The Secretariat will meet at least four times a year.

14.2 A facilitator for the Secretariat will be nominated by its membership annually

14.3 The quorum for Secretariat meetings is one third (3 members)

14.4 Notice of meetings and the agenda will be sent in advance of meetings

14.5 Any member of the Secretariat can place an item on the agenda, this must be made at least 7 days in advance of the meeting

14.6 Minutes of all meetings are recorded

14.7 Minutes of meetings should be circulated 7 days in advance of the following meeting

14.8 Decision making will be made by consensus, when this is not possible is will be made by a majority vote.

14.9 The Secretariat will invoke the disciplinary and appeals procedure for any member who fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings, without sending apologies.

15. Election of PPN Representatives to County Structures

15.1 When a position becomes available on a County Structure/Committee an election will be held

15.2 In all elections of PPN representatives, care will be taken to ensure:

- Gender balance
- Geographical spread of representatives

15.3 Successfully elected candidates will be formally ratified at the PPN County Plenary meeting.

15.4 If anyone nominated through this process subsequently decides to enter electoral politics he/she must immediately resign their PPN representative role and the relevant nominating PPN unit (Electoral College / Linkage Group) will choose a replacement

15.5 A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local or national) should not be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.

15.6 Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated

15.7 The nominees are required to represent the PPN and are accountable to the PPN membership. They are not representing their own organisation

15.8 The track record of the nominee can be taken into consideration when seeking nominations

15.9 The ability of the nominee to make an effective contribution can be taken into consideration

15.10 Nominees need to give a commitment that they will fulfil their representational role and lead the linkage group as set out in the Representatives Charter

15.11 Elected representatives of Local Authorities cannot be nominated through this process

15.12 An individual should only represent the PPN on one external board or committee

16. Nomination Procedure

16.1 Registered PPN members will be invited to participate in nomination and election procedures, through the Plenary, Electoral Colleges, Municipal District or Linkage Group

16.2 In the case of PPN membership groups that are affiliated to County wide governing bodies, only one nomination can be made by the County governing body (this does not apply in the Municipal District nomination and election processes)

16.3 PPN membership groups should be given 21 days' notice of a nomination and election process

16.4 Nomination papers will be sent to each membership group, to the email or address indicated on the PPN registration form.

16.5 Nomination forms must be fully completed, by an officer of the nominating group, to be eligible for inclusion in the election

16.6 A returning officer, selected by Leitrim PPN Secretariat will decide on the validity of the nomination form and their decision is final.

16.7 Nomination forms must be submitted online or by post, as indicated by the PPN Secretariat by the closing date

16.8 Where the same person is nominated for an Electoral College and a Municipal District, they will be asked to identify which position they prefer. No candidate can contest two seats.

17. Elections

17.1 All fully completed nominations received by the closing date, which are deemed eligible, will be put forward for the election

17.2 21 days' notice of an election will be given

17.3 A set of voting papers will be issued to the person nominated to represent the group at the meeting, or if they cannot be there, their alternate; as indicated on the PPN registration form.

17.4 Groups affiliated to County wide governing bodies can be members of linkage groups, municipal district and Plenary of the PPN. For elections that take place at Plenary, electoral college and linkage group levels, only the County Governing body is eligible to nominate and vote.

17.5 Ballot papers can only be issued to the main voting representative, or the alternate, of a member organization

17.6 All voting representatives should have a picture ID with them. (Driver's license, Passport, Student ID). When they present their ID, they will receive voting papers for their specified Municipal District, Electoral College or Linkage Group where appropriate.

17.7 Officers will be appointed by Leitrim PPN Secretariat to oversee the election and count the ballot papers.

17.8 Where the number of candidates nominated equals the number of seats, these candidates will be automatically deemed elected.

17.9 Voting will take place in accordance with a first past the post system.

17.10 Where the number of candidates exceeds the number of seats, the person(s) who receives the highest number of first preference votes will be deemed elected, taking into consideration measures to ensure gender balance and a geographic spread of candidates, as appropriate.

17.11 In the event that that a clear preference is not indicated on a ballot sheet, it will be deemed a spoiled vote and will not be counted.

17.12 In the event of a tie, the successful candidate will be determined by lot. The names of tied candidates will put in a hat. The first name drawn out will be deemed to be elected. If there are two seats the first two names drawn out will be deemed elected.

17.13 Nominated delegates who are unsuccessful will be deemed 'substitute members' in the event that the successful nominee resigns her or his seat over the lifetime of the

Secretariat. The unsuccessful nominee with the highest number of votes will be the first substitute; the second highest number of votes will be second substitute and so on

17.14 In the event that the number of nominations is below the number of positions available, another election and nomination process can be held

17.15 Appeals on the nomination and or election process should be made in writing to the PPN Secretariat.

17.16 No representative can serve a term of more than 5 years, without being put forward for re-election

18. Conflicts of Interest on Committees of the PPN

18.1 Members should demonstrate transparency in all dealings and act in an honest, fair and independent way.

18.2 Committee members must disclose any conflict of interest, be it personal, family, business or otherwise, in relation to any initiative taken by the committee.

18.3 A conflict of interest can be related to personal, family or business matters, and may be associated with the member or anyone connected with the member benefitting directly or indirectly from activities of the committee.

18.4 Where a conflict of interest is declared by a member, that member will leave the meeting and will not be entitled to vote on the matter in which they have an interest. Upon returning to the meeting, the member will be notified of the decision by the Chair and no further discussion will take place. All registered conflicts will be recorded in the minutes.

18.5 If a disclosure of interest is made at a meeting, particulars of the disclosure will be recorded in the minutes. While the disclosure related matter is being dealt with at the meeting, the person who made the disclosure shall not be counted in the quorum for the meeting.

19. Protecting the Integrity of the PPN

19.1 To protect the integrity of the PPN, a disciplinary and appeals procedures document outlines the process to be undertaken when an allegation is made that a group is ...

a. Acting in a manner contrary to the values, aims or objectives of the PPN.

Or

b. Failing to comply with the criteria for membership set out in section 4 of this Constitution

19.2 While the disciplinary process is being pursued, voting rights for groups will be suspended until the issue has been resolved. In line with due process and the disciplinary and appeals procedures document, a membership group may be exonerated or removed from the PPN. An appeals process is available to groups.

19.3 The disciplinary and appeals procedure can also be invoked by the Secretariat when notice is given that a representative is failing to attend meetings or adhere to the Representatives Charter

20. Amendments to the Constitution

20.1 Future amendments to the 'Constitution' shall be decided by a two-thirds majority of Plenary members, present at a meeting and eligible to vote.

20.2 A proposal to make an amendment to a Constitution can be made by the Secretariat or by any registered member of the PPN

20.3 Proposals to amend the Constitution should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing within 14 days of the Plenary Meeting and made available to Plenary members at least 7 days in advance of a Plenary meeting.