

Report on Connecting Communities Conference, 10th October, 2018. Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny.

In attendance on behalf of Co. Wexford PPN:

Mr. David Doyle, Mr. Noel Stacey, Ms. Annette Dupuy.

Mr. John Warren opened the conference by welcoming everyone, noting there was a change in the agenda and asked Minister John Paul Phelan to address the attendees.

He emphasised the importance of community, and noted the matter of good governance. He said that it was unknown the no. of schemes supported by grants from Departments of State, leader, Co. Co., SICAP and noted the expansion into health and mental health matters as well as for example Mens Sheds. All these groups filled Government and state gaps which it is impossible to fill or provide.

Katherine Peacock of Kilkenny PPN emphasised that PPN is the official voice of community and the importance of the local authority for networking and the provision of training by PPN as well as the free registration available to groups.

John Warren emphasised the achievement of developments at community level, and how community groups kept services going during the recession.

Barry Symes outlined the availability of loans through Community Finance Ireland to community groups while waiting for grants aid. It has provided funding to tourism projects, community centres etc. where normal income streams cannot lever sufficient funds. 97 projects availed of €7 m. in 2017. He cited the Castlecomer park (old collier industry) as a project which used the service.

David Millar of Compufire outlined his system which assists with risk management corporate risk compliance issues. He cited the legal liabilities under the Garda Vetting process on Directors and Boards as well as liabilities under the Children First Act which impacts on groups and Boards where children are involved.

9 educational sessions were held in blocks of three. Attendees could attend one per block.

John Warren advised that the presentations would be circulated.

A session on communications was given which emphasised the need to have a strategy, set your comms. plan, identify who we wished to communicate with, what is the key message, what channels of comms. will you use, plan its implementation and establish if it has been successful.

It is important to try to both influence and engage your audience and to use both the traditional and digital methods of communication. An IPSO survey in Nov. 2017 analysed the usage and age profile of the current social media which is a useful tool to use when profiling a target audience.

A company called CLG in Carlow outlined the role of the Company secretary, the need for the Co. Sec. to be familiar with the Company law and ensure the Board maintains its operations within the realms and in compliance with the law.

The matter of who can be a Member, is it only a Director? The records the Co. sec. is responsible for, Compliance with section 223, AGM matters, financial statements, letter head, and the importance of the constitution and memo and art of association to ensure clarity as to the operations of the Company.

The Good Governance seminar was given by CH Consulting. The role of trustees, ethics of good governance, accountability, openness and transparency, responsiveness to issues, compliance with the law, ensuring all policies and procedures are in place were outlined and discussed.

Noted a new governance code by the Regulator is scheduled for 7th November.

Examples of openness and transparency are:

Placing accounts and tax clearance certs on website, having a constitution and supporting strategies,

Mitigate risk, longer term financial planning, a Board handbook, code of practice. Ensure you know who your stake holders are.

Sub committees to have a mix of expertise form the Board and from outside, ensure sub committees have terms of reference and when task is completed they are dissolved.

Duty to work for the company not the organisation who may have nominated you onto it.

Confidentiality and agreement as to who is the spokesman for the Board.

Mr. John Farrelly, CRA outlined the duties of trustees, and responsibilities as well as the management of conflicts of interest, the need for internal financial controls, transparency, fundraising, unregulated organisations, the new Charities governance code which is principles based.

Discussed the issue of resources to comply and the proposal for a charities passport thus reducing duplication. The need to specify the function within the constitution and importance of not spending except for these purposes.

Report provided by Noel Stacey