

## National Advisory Group

*Date/Time:* Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 11.00.

*Venue:* Webex via Department of Rural and Community Development, Conference Room, 5th Floor, Trinity Point, 10-11 Leinster Street South, Dublin 2, D02 EF85.

### Minutes

*Attendees:*

*Pillar Representatives:*

- Seán Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar).
- Catherine Lane (C&V Pillar).
- Michael Ewing, (Environment pillar),

*PPN Volunteers:*

- Aileen Eglinton (Dún Laoghaire Rathdown PPN; C&V representative),
- Bibiana Savin (South Dublin PPN; Social Inclusion representative),
- Terrence Mc Donough (Galway City Community Network; Environmental representative)

*PPN Resource Workers:*

- Helen Howes (Wicklow PPN),
- Avril Wilson (Tipperary PPN)
- Sarah Wetherald (Sligo).

*CCMA Representatives:*

- Rebecca Loughrey, (Cork City Council),
- Alan Farrell, (Galway County Council)

*Department of Rural and Community Development:*

- Ciara Bates (Chair), Deirdre Kearney, Elaine Jennings, Caoimhín Ó Tuathail, Alan Monks.

*Apologies:*

- None

The Chair opened the meeting which was conducted on-line due to the current restrictions as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

#### **1. Adoption of Minutes.**

The minutes of the 14th Meeting of the Group held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were adopted.

#### **2. Matters arising.**

The Department advised the advisory group that work on the draft GDPR document was not yet finalised but would be prioritised in 2021. Further details in Agenda Item No 4 below

#### **3. Tenure of National Advisory Group Representatives**

The Department advised that five of the members present have served beyond the three-year tenure of the PPN Advisory Group. The Chair thanked these members for their work over the past three years.

It was clarified that the current iteration of the NAG (2017-2020) is regarded as the first full NAG. As a result, while it is proposed to limit membership of the NAG to 2 consecutive terms, members of the current NAG are permitted to run for the next iteration of the NAG (2021 - 2023/4) provided they are nominated by their nominating body.

Following the meeting the Department will write to the respective nominating bodies, outlining the position regarding tenure, terms served and seeking nominations for the NAG for a three year term commencing in 2021.

#### **4. GDPR/ FOI**

Department informed the NAG, that following informal consultation with DRCD's own DPO/FOI officer, the issues concerning GDPR/FOI require expert advice (possibly including legal advice). The complexity of PPN structures means additional expert consideration is needed regarding data controller/processor roles for PPNs' various information management systems (Salesforce, email etc.).

The Department intends to progress this work early in 2021 and once a draft has been prepared, it will be shared with members of the NAG for their input.

#### **5. Update on Enclude eVoting System**

The Department stated that in light of the practical difficulties SDVC has encountered in trying to start the e-voting project, Tricia Nolan in SDVC has suggested that Enclude conduct an initial investigation to see if a suitable eVoting solution might be possible within Salesforce. This cannot be conducted until the New Year.

The Chair invited the views of the NAG on whether they thought it was a worthwhile exercise. It was agreed to circulate a survey to the PPN's to see what other IT priorities there are to support the PPN's.

## **6. Review of PPN Structure**

The Department informed the group that a tendering process for a consultant to undertake the PPN Structural Review is in train and will be advertised on the OGP consultancy framework very shortly. The RFT submitted took into account the comments made by NAG members when this was circulated recently, including amending the wording to more clearly specify that the review would focus on the current PPN structure.

In response to issues raised concerning the scope and remit of the Structural Review, the Chair restated that the purpose of the review is to assess the operation of the network to date against the overall objectives and to make recommendations as to how to build on existing strengths and support the future development of PPNs. The review will look at how PPNs interact with all stakeholders, including local authorities and assess the overall structure of engagement, as well as the necessary support structures and best practices. An oversight committee is being put in place to ensure the review takes an overall, holistic view of PPN involvement with citizen engagement.

The Department invited NAG members to sit on the evaluation committee that will review all tenders received and select the service provider. It also invited two nominees to sit on the oversight committee, which will oversee the work of the review.

## **7. Subgroups**

### User Handbook

The Department informed the group that the Handbook is at final stages of design, which will be followed by online publication. A webinar launch on the Handbook was organised for 19 November. Over 100 attendees have confirmed for this event. The timetable of the event was shared and NAG members were informed that there would be an option of further questions to be submitted to the Department for input into an FAQ (which will be available on the Department's website) following the webinar.

The Department's Comms Unit are uploading the Handbook (including separate stakeholder sections) to the Department's website in printable pdf and chapter format. There is also a commitment that this will be a living document, to be reviewed again following the Structural Review. This will be the first review and it is proposed that subsequent reviews will be carried out bi-annually.

It is the Department's intention to issue a circular post launch indicating that the Handbook supersedes all previous versions of the PPN user guide.

### Communications Strategy

The Department acknowledged the feedback received from the Comms subgroup (Aileen, Sarah) and from the CCMA. It took the feedback on board in the RFT. It will be published on etenders shortly and a contract will be awarded in Q1 2021.

The CCMA suggested the PPN Comms Strategy be tied in with the proposed LCDC Comms Strategy. However, this is not possible as the LCDC Strategy will not be progressed until later in 2021. However, both Strategies will be aligned at that stage.

### Annual Report

Annual Report complete. Bilingual report at design stage following procurement process carried out by Carlow PPN out for design and printing. Minister of State, Joe O'Brien T.D. to launch the Report at the start of the webinar on the PPN Handbook on the 19th of November.

The Department intends to convene a meeting of the AR sub-group late December/early January to consider the feedback in terms of the template, software/technology, etc. for the Annual Report 2020. It was also suggested that the report include an element on the Covid-19 response that influenced much of 2020. The Department sought a nominee to the sub-committee with technical experience; alternatively the Resource Worker network will be contacted for nominees.

### Annual Conference

As the prospect of holding the Conference on the dates previously agreed looked increasingly unlikely, the Advisory Group decided to defer the Conference until November 2021. It was agreed that Helen would contact the hotel again to explore the possibility of availability of dates in early November 2021 (5/6<sup>th</sup> or 12/13<sup>th</sup>) and for these dates to be confirmed with the Minister's Office.

Alternative options, e.g. an online conference (webinar) might have to be considered in Q2 2021 along with some issues from the conference agenda.

## **8. Funding 2020 & Returns**

2nd Tranche funding for 2020 has been forwarded to all PPN's who met the criteria. Department will be looking at the ring-fenced funding for the support workers in early 2021. Any underspend in this area will be deducted from the first tranche of PPN funding due in 2021 for the support workers.

The majority of Income & Expenditure returns were received and a review of these has been undertaken. As a result of the review a financial control procedure/circular has been prepared to assist PPN's with financial reporting in the future. All NAG members received this together with the agenda, and views and recommendations on the contents of this document would be welcome.

Department was asked if the RW Network could review the draft also. All feedback will be considered in drafting the final version of the financial controls procedure.

## **9. Training Needs**

DRCD thanked SJI for the training programme which they had developed with WIT. Seán Healy gave a brief update on the learning programme outlining the number of

participants and the modules completed to date. The meeting was informed that the feedback on the training was very positive as was that on the handbook which was made available for the training. Once the evaluation of the 1<sup>st</sup> training cohort is complete it will be rolled out to the rest of the PPN's across the country.

## **10. Secretariat Network**

Stephen Rourke has been reappointed for another term as facilitator to the Secretariat Network following a tendering process. The Secretariat met on the 5th of November and the Department attended part of the meeting to provide an update and to answer any questions. The NAG conveyed its approval of the re-appointment.

## **11. Community Wellbeing**

The Department attended the online event run by TASC on Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> November. The Department of Finance produced a report on the topic of developing numerical indicators of wellbeing in a national context, and this report was circulated to all NAG members with the agenda. D/Taoiseach is establishing an expert group to feed this work into the Budget 2021 process.

DRCD is currently drafting a briefing paper on PPNs' Community Wellbeing project for submission to D/Taoiseach outlining PPNs' critical work in this area. NAG members were invited to contribute to this briefing. Michael, Sean and Terrence will feed into this paper. NAG members expressed a view that there appears to be a disconnect between the work being done on Community Wellbeing by the PPN's and the TASC Project, however, the Department's input into the D/Taoiseach's process will address this issue.

## **12. A.O.B**

Updates from RW Network concerned the training programme, the Keep Well campaign, the provision of IT equipment to PPN Secretariat members/ reps and whether stipends for childcare might be made available to volunteers.

The Chair observed that DRCD had made representations on the Keep Well document. She noted that stipends from government departments are enshrined in legislation, and that DRCD has serious reservations about the purchase of IT equipment for Secretariat members/ reps using PPN funding.

Nominees to NAG. As Michael, Aileen, Seán, Catherine and Helen are coming to the end of their term on the NAG, Ciara thanked them on her own behalf and that of the Department for their hard work and dedication to the PPN's over the last few years and wished them well in their future roles.

Next meeting: DRCD to conduct doodle poll for suitable date.

Meeting Ends