

PPN National Advisory Group

Date/Time: 11.00hrs Tuesday 25 June 2019

Venue: 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:

- Sean Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar).
- Catherine Lane (C&V Pillar).

PPN Volunteers:

- Aileen Eglington (Dún Laoghaire Rathdown PPN; C&V representative),
- Bibiana Savin (South Dublin PPN; Social Inclusion representative),

PPN Resource Workers:

- Helen Howes (Wicklow PPN),
- Avril Wilson (Tipperary PPN)
- Jamie Moore (Fingal PPN).

CCMA Representatives:

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

Department of Rural and Community Development:

- Officials – Deirdre Kearney (Chair), Niall Hayden,

Apologies:

- Ciara Bates
- Michael Ewing, (Environment pillar),
- Theresa O'Donohoe; Clare PPN (Environmental representative),

Adoption of Minutes.

The minutes of 8th Meeting of the Group held on 2nd May 2019 were adopted. There were no matters arising.

1. Local Authority Engagement

As stated at the May meeting of the Group, local authority engagement and support is crucial for in the ongoing development of PPNs. To that end, the Department agreed to write to the CCMA seeking a meeting with them to advance the cause of PPNs and encourage greater local authority engagement with the process. It was recognised that this was particularly timely in the context of the Corporate Plan currently being developed by the local authorities.

The meeting acknowledged that while there were issues to be addressed by some authorities, the levels of engagement by others was very good. It was a matter of bringing all up to a specific level of engagement and that would require targeted training for new and existing elected reps, LA officials and PPN's themselves. In the interim, the Department would remind LAs, by circular, of the function of PPNs and the requirement for local authorities to engage with PPNs in the setting up of new local authority committees, following the May 2019 local elections.

2. PPN Structure

The position paper as discussed at the May meeting of the group was circulated to all PPNs. Three responses had been received by the date of this meeting. All responses received will be circulated to the Group for consideration in the context of arriving at a final decision on the matter which will be communicated to local authorities and PPNs, by means of Department circular.

In the context of PPNs operating under a company structure, the circular will emphasise the need for full awareness of corporate governance obligations

3. Sub Groups –

- *2018 Annual Report* – the meeting was advised that all returns have been received (with the exception of Limerick and Roscommon) and a first draft of the report should issue to the sub group within days. It was suggested that a launch date for the report could coincide with the September meeting of the Group.
- *User Guide* – a compendium of issues has been compiled and circulated to sub group members. Following directly from this meeting, the User Guide sub group was meeting to discuss such issues as compilation, content, procedures and layout. It was agreed that it was important for the handbook to be clear, include mandatory procedures, and offer best advice and good practice. The Advisory Group were advised that in all probability the compilation and drafting of the new handbook would need to go to tender primarily because of the volume of work involved.

- *2019 Conference* – the sub group looking after Conference continues with its programme of work – finalising agenda, presentations, trips etc.

The group briefly discussed a number of issues to do with conference i.e.

- how best to ensure those attending would stay beyond the first day – the agenda for day 2 will be designed to assist here,
 - attracting more local authority personnel – input and encouragement from the CCMA would assist and finally,
 - talking upwards and outwards – highlighting the potential of PPNs, what PPNs are all about and the impact they have and can make on communities.
- *Communications Strategy* – the sub group charged with developing this strategy held its inaugural meeting in early June. The group have requested its members to provide individual feedback from that meeting which will be considered by the group as a whole. Issues to be considered include local and or national campaigns, national branding that compliments local branding as a start. The Group will reconvene in due course when all members have submitted their feedback.

4. Support Workers

The Chair advised that group that while every effort would be made by the Department to secure funding to allow for the extension of the contracts of Support Workers beyond the initial 12 month period, there was no guarantee of future funding. That had been the message from the outset and was worth repeating. With the Estimates process about to commence, it would not be until the end of the year before the Department would know the outcome of its submission to DPER.

5. Training needs.

As advised at the meeting in May, procurement considerations would most likely necessitate the Department seeking tenders for this work. With that in mind the group was advised that the Department was currently drafting appropriate tender specifications that will encompass the needs of a suite of group requiring training – Local Authority personnel, elected reps, secretariat members, etc.

The Group was advised by Sean Healy that SJI had commenced a training needs analysis (an essential component in providing any targeted training programme) and that they had received some 33 responses to date. SJI will be rolling out their product and it will be complimentary to the Department's training programme.

6. Secretariat Network

The Chair advised the group of the very good responses that had been received following the inaugural meeting of the new Network. Aileen Eglington, who had attended this meeting as an elected member of the Secretariat Network commented on the great range of skill sets amongst those attending. The group agreed that this wealth of experience needed to be harnessed for the betterment of PPNs. The Network are scheduled to have their next meeting in early September.

7. Limerick and Roscommon PPN

The Chair appraised the meeting on developments in both Limerick and Roscommon. In the latter, an independent Chair has been appointed to work with the PPN for a period of 12 months. The local authority have also appointed a Resource Worker to the PPN. The remaining Secretariat members have agreed to step down from their role and the next step is for a plenary meeting to be called.

In Limerick, events have progressed positively to the extent that the review Committee set up with the intention of establishing a PPN, is no longer required, as the PPN is already in the process of being re-established. The local authority has seconded a staff member with vast experience in dealing with community matters to the role of Resource Worker and she will be kick-starting the new PPN. This appointment is temporary until such time as the PPN is functioning and operating as intended. A Plenary meeting is scheduled to take place in early September.

8. National Resource.

This item relates to the need for a National Coordinator for PPNs. While this proposal was mooted in the past, what is now envisaged is that the role would encompass working with all PPNs, the NAG and the Department and not simply with Resource Workers. With the brief extended, the consensus feeling of the group was that this could be a positive development. A proposal outlining the role foreseen and alternatives to direct funding by the Department would be submitted to the Department in due course.

9. Insurance.

This item has been the subject of discussion at recent meetings of the group, with differing views being expressed. In view of the potential financial implications for volunteers, the indemnification requirements for local authorities imposed by insurers, the absence of clear direction from insurers, the structures of some PPNs (hosting arrangements and company status) and the fact that some PPN's have, as in the case of Wicklow, indemnified the LA as part of their MoU, it was agreed that the matter would be further discussed at the next NAG meeting on foot of the receipt of a paper on the matter to be drawn up by Sean Healy.

10. AOB

Religious groups – no bar on membership of a PPN providing the fundamental principles underlying PPN membership are met

Membership Lists of PPN being made public – the group agreed that this would be in order provided the requirements of the Data Protection legislation are not compromised.

11. Date for Next Meeting

Wednesday 4th September 2019, Trinity Point 11.00 am.