

PPN National Advisory Group

Date/Time: 11.00hrs Wednesday 04 September 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:

- Collette Bennet for Sean 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),

PPN Resource Workers:

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

CCMA Representatives:

- Alan Farrell (Galway County Council),

Department of Rural and Community Development:

- Ciara Bates (Chair), Deirdre Kearney, Niall Hayden, Jennifer Kelly, Ellie Corcoran,

Apologies:

- Rebecca Loughry, (Cork City Council),

2. Adoption of Minutes.

The minutes of 9th Meeting of the Group held on 25th June 2019 were adopted. There were no matters arising.

3. The Chair introduced Ms Anne Colgan, Centre for Effective Business, who has been engaged by D/PER to undertake a case study of PPNs. This is one of four studies commissioned by D/PER, the other three relate to Comhairle na nÓg, 300K-Have Your Say (Participative Budgeting in South Dublin Co Co), and the Citizen Assembly.

- There was a general discussion of the group's experience with PPNs.
- Following this discussion, Ms. Colgan invited the National Advisory Group to participate in the study and circulated a paper for comments, which are to be returned to Ms. Colgan.
- It was also suggested that Ms. Colgan engage with the Resource Worker and PPN Secretariat Network.

4. As a slight alteration to the agenda items, Gráinne O'Neill from Carlow PPN made a presentation about preparations for the 2019 annual conference.

5. Local Authority Engagement -

- The group was advised that a letter issued from Bairbre Nic Aongusa to Ms Ann Doherty, Chair of EECC of CCMA on 23

August, seeking a meeting with EECC to update members on PPN developments and seeking greater local authority involvement in PPN activities such as review of PPN User Guide, in addition to training, insurance and T&S.

- The group considered what 3 key issues the DRCD should present to EECC. These included greater buy-in from the local authorities, and the need for training for new reps and LA members. It was agreed that training should focus on ensuring newly established committees are properly equipped for the task.
- It was reported that some SPCs are not operating effectively and may not be adhering to the 2014 SPC guidelines. DRCD to contact D/Housing to check whether the 2014 guidelines have been updated.

6. Review of PPN Structure

- It was highlighted that a number of issues have arisen in relation to the operation of PPNs including the establishment of PPNs as companies, conflict resolution requiring the DRCD to step in, Resource Workers' employment conditions, secretariats operating as decision making body for PPNs, calls for a national co-ordinator.
- Given the emergence of these and other issues, the Chair advised that the Department will initiate a review of the PPN structure in early 2020 to assess how PPNs are operating and highlight instances of best practice
- It was agreed by the group that the proposed review is timely. The review group will be established in January 2020 in consultation with stakeholders. Draft Terms of Reference will be circulated in advance to all relevant stakeholders, who will be given full opportunity to feed into the review.
- Any matters arising in the interim will be addressed. In particular, the review of the User Guide and the development of a new User Handbook will proceed in advance of the PPN structural review. It was recognised that some changes to the new Handbook may be required post

review but the intention is that the Handbook will be an evolving document.

- In addition, the position in relation to the establishment of PPNs as companies' stands – the prior approval of the Department must be obtained to any such proposals.
- The 2020 review may also consider the Terms of Reference of the National Advisory Group.

7. Subgroups

Annual Report

- The report has been completed and awaiting launch by the Minister. Following the publication of the report, the subgroup will re-convene to review the template and consider where improvements are necessary.

User guide

- Subgroup to be involved in evaluation of tenders, with exception of any subgroup members who have expressed an interest in tendering for this project.
- Resource Workers and Secretariat networks to be provided with draft of new Handbook for their input. A Local Authority contribution will also be sought which will require draft to be circulated to LAs.

Communications Strategy

- It was agreed that a national strategy is required, involving consultation with stakeholders. In the meantime, Resource Workers have requested generic media material, which can be tailored to the requirements of individual PPNs. Work on this is underway.

8. Support Workers

- DRCD has sought funding to maintain Support Workers in 2020.

9. Training Needs.

- Dept finalising tender document. It is intended to seek tenders for this project from a number of providers

10. Secretariat Network

- This group is operating successfully, the facilitator's comprehensive report indicated a good first meeting; the second meeting is due to take place on September 12th. The initial 26 PPNs represented now number 29. As with Resource Workers' Network meetings, DRCD will attend for part of the meeting to update the group on DRCD matters. The group has been requested to nominate a replacement participant for the environmental pillar on the NAG.

11. Limerick, Leitrim and Roscommon.

- Limerick PPN is back in operation, taking registrations and planning plenary meeting for end September. The current secretariat will remain in force until year end.
- Roscommon PPN has had an independent facilitator appointed and a new Resource Worker. Re-registration is ongoing, a new secretariat is being formed and a constitution is being drafted.
- Leitrim PPN met members of DRCD in July in relation to a number of issues. The Department is engaging with all stakeholders to address the issues raised.
- A number of queries have arisen in respect of Cork County PPN, the Department is planning to meet representatives from PPN and LA in October.

12. National Resource

- Resource Worker Network submitted a proposal to DRCD which is under consideration. The role must be deliberated firstly with due regard to HR matters, also with the 2020 PPN structures review. Hosting of the position is an important factor as is the availability of funding.

13. Insurance

- The Chair commended the PPN network for their survey on insurance which provides a good evidential base to the issues.
- A submission will be made to the Minister to make representations to Minister Darcy on behalf of all groups under the aegis of the Department requesting this issue to be placed on the Agenda of the Cost of Insurance Working Group.
- It was agreed that the matter of persons being requested to indemnify the LAs as a prerequisite for T&S payments could be addressed by PPNs providing the funding to ensure that their representatives are not out of pocket as a result of the nominal extra cost of such indemnification.

14. Environmental Representation

- There was a general discussion regarding the low level of Environmental Pillar (EP) representation on PPNs. The Chair referred to the limiting effect of the EP membership criteria on the EP membership of PPNs. The Chair raised the possibility of alternative criteria for EP membership of PPNs.
- Michael Ewing outlined the position in relation to the eligibility criteria of the EP and stated that even with full EP numbers, there would always be a relatively low percentage of EP representation on PPNs generally. He also advised that the EP is poorly financed reducing the scope of those therein to get involved in a large number of matters.
- It was noted that thanks to funding from DRCD, DCCAE & EPA, the EP was in a position to facilitate Catherine O'Toole's awareness raising outreach programmes which has generated a 25% increase in EP participation. He also advised that the EP has undertaken initial consultation with the Tidy Towns Unit of the Department with a view to examining the scope for including tidy towns groups within the EP. It was agreed that the issue would be considered fully again in September 2020.

Helen Howes advised of an increase in environmental reps and groups in Wicklow and of the establishment of a new Biodiversity SPC within the Council

Next meeting: Thursday 07 November 2019.