

## **PPN National Advisory Group**

*Date/Time:* Wednesday 05 February 2020, 10.45hrs.

*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:*

- Seán Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar).
- Catherine Lane (C&V 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:*

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

*Department of Rural and Community Development:*

- Deirdre Kearney (Chair), Niall Hayden, Ellie Corcoran, Caoimhín O Tuathail.

*Apologies:*

- Michael Ewing, (Environment pillar),
- Ciara Bates, DRCD

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Sarah Wetherald and introducing the group. Sarah is the Resource Worker in Sligo PPN.

The Chair drew the attention of the group to correspondence received by Minister Sean Canney in January 2020 from a former group member.

A confidentiality agreement form was circulated to members for signature. Some minor amendments were suggested which will necessitate the form being recirculated to the group.

### **Adoption of Minutes.**

The minutes of 11th Meeting of the Group held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 were adopted. There were no matters arising.

### **Engagement with Local Authorities-**

- DRCD Management Board due to meet with the CCMA on 06 February and will highlight the issue of PPNs in their discussions.
- There was a general discussion regarding the proposed review of the 2014 SPC Guidelines, to be conducted by Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Among the issues discussed was the importance of training at local level. It was agreed that a representative of the DHPLG be invited to attend the next NAG meeting to hear the Group's views on the matter. The Group agreed that it would also submit its views for the proposed review of the Guidelines. In the event that the review had progressed significantly before the next NAG meeting, the group agreed an earlier meeting would be acceptable.

Action Point: DRCD to contact DHPLG to invite rep to next NAG meeting

### **Review of PPN Structure**

The Group was advised that the Department, in conjunction with the NAG, proposed to undertake a comprehensive review of the PPN structures in 2020. In advance of the meeting, the group had been circulated with some points that might form the basis of the group's considerations on a Terms of Reference for the structural review. The Chair stressed that this document was only to get the process started – a brain storming exercise that was neither exhaustive nor complete.

The group made a number of suggestions regarding the proposed structural review, including

- The importance of setting the correct Terms of Reference

- Everything should be on the table,
- A fully participative consultation process was crucial.
- The wellbeing project could provide a valuable template for consultations
- Diversity of experiences and suggestions from wide-ranging stakeholders would offer broad platform.
- Staffing and resources needed to be considered in any review,
- High levels of turnover among Resource Workers to be considered
- Key Performance Indicators tend to measure outcome in terms of numbers; the purpose of PPNs is to foster and enhance better citizen engagement thus outcomes should also be assessed qualitatively.
- The necessity to capture the activities and achievements of PPNs.

Action point: Sub-group to be established and meetings organised. The subgroup comprises Avril Wilson, Seán Healy, Bibiana Savin, Rebecca Loughrey and a rep from the Department

## **Subgroups**

### *User Handbook*

- The consultation by stakeholders is ongoing. Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February is the latest date for receipt of submissions. Submissions when received will form the basis of the next draft of the report which will be considered and signed off on by the Group.

### *Communications Strategy*

- Department to seek tenders for a Communications Strategy which will comprise both an awareness campaign to inform the general public about PPNs and a strategy to inform PPNs about how they should engage with each other and other stakeholders. Inclusion of examples of best practice would provide guidance.
- A pamphlet style publication could be circulated to offer an initial introduction to PPNs.
- Social media dimension would ensure an all-pervasive approach.
- To enable time for tendering it is envisaged to have the Strategy completed by Quarter 3.
- Similar to the annual Volunteer Awards, the Chair suggested an annual awards event for PPNs to encourage participation and maximise public exposure. Recipients could be nominated to avoid unnecessary competition which might be divisive. Purpose of awards is to showcase best practice examples and generate positive publicity. The possibility of liaising with CRAOL (Community Radio Forum of Ireland) was discussed.

The general consensus of the group was in favour of the suggestion.

### Annual Report

- The reporting template used for the 2018 annual will be used to obtain the information required for compilation of the 2019 report. The recent circular letter, CSVP 3/2020 - PPN Income & Expenditure Account 2019, removes the need to include financial returns in the annual report request, as this data will be compiled separately. It is hoped that the completed 2019 annual report will be presented earlier in the year than in previous years.

### *Annual Conference*

- Two Expression of Interest to host the 2020 Annual Conference were received – Laois and Wicklow.
- Considering feedback from the 2019 conference, the 2020 conference will be held on Friday afternoon and Saturday.
- The Expressions of Interest received were distributed to the group for assessment under a number of headings:
- The Rep from Wicklow PPN excused herself from this part of the meeting.

### **Support Workers**

The Chair advised the Group that funding for the Support Workers has been mainstreamed and is now part of the Departments budget going forward.

The group welcomed this positive development.

### **Funding 2020**

A circular letter regarding funding for 2020 to issue imminently detailing the requirements for receipt of 2020 funding.

### **Training Needs.**

The tender received is currently under consideration in the Department.

### **Secretariat Network**

The meeting was advised that the Secretariat Network has organised a number of meetings to prepare their feedback for the draft Handbook.

### **Term of Office for National Advisory Group**

The group was advised that a number of members are approaching the end of their current 3-year term of office. As there is currently no guidance on whether members

can serve multiple or continuous terms, it was agreed that this matter would be addressed in the structural review.

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

- The matter of substitutes or alternates for single representatives to attend NAG meetings was discussed; in the event that that representative cannot attend, it is suggested that an alternate could be appointed. It was agreed that this issue would be addressed as part of the structural review;
- The group raised the issue of increasing insurance premia and its impact on voluntary groups. The Chair agreed to provide an update for the Group on the Department's action in this regard
- The issue of a National PPN Co-ordinator was also raised.

Next meeting: Tuesday 21 April 2020.10.45 am