

## **PPN National Advisory Group**

**Date/Time: 11.00hrs Thursday 02 May 2019**

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

### **Minutes**

#### **Attendees:**

#### **Pillar Representatives:**

- Sean Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar).
- Michael Ewing (Environmental 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).

#### **Department of Rural and Community Development:**

- Officials – Ciara Bates (Chair), Deirdre Kearney, Niall Hayden, Ellie Corcoran.

#### **Apologies:**

- Alan Farrell (Galway County PPN; CCMA representative),
- Rebecca Loughry, (Cork City Council; CCMA representative),
- Catherine Lane, (C&V pillar),
- Theresa O'Donohoe; Clare PPN; Environmental representative),

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am

#### **Adoption of Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Group held on 13 February 2019.**

The minutes were adopted without amendment.

### **1. Matters Arising.**

There were no matters.

### **2. New and departing members.**

Avril Wilson Tipperary PPN replacing Annette Barr Jordan as 3<sup>RD</sup> Resource Worker representative; Ciara introduced and welcomed Avril to the group.

As the CCMA representatives were absent due to commitments relating to the upcoming local elections, it was suggested that it would be useful for one or both members to sit on either the User Guide or Comms sub group.

In addition it was recommended that with the Local Community Development Committees reforming following the forthcoming local elections it might be an ideal time to contact the EEEEC group of the CCMA for an opportunity to promote PPNs and encourage better local authority engagement with the process.

Action Point: DRCD to write to EEEEC of CCMA on the matter.

### **3. Review of PPN Structure**

When the proposed structures document is agreed by the group, it will be circulated to PPNs for comment. Thereafter, the final draft, along with any comments received from PPNs, will be distributed to the Advisory group for final agreement, following which it will issue as a Circular to PPNs. It was restated that where PPNs operating as companies are functioning in line with DRCD requirements, there was no need to insist on change. However, it was agreed that no new companies should be established without the prior written agreement of the Department.

In view of experiences in some PPNs, templates for best practice compliance will be included in the final document to issue. Each PPN operating as a company will be advised to ensure that a separate MOU is in place between the company and the PPN and another between the company and the local authority.

PPNs operating as companies are reminded of the need to be fully aware of their corporate governance responsibilities, and that they may need to seek training on this specific issue. In particular, volunteers need to be absolutely clear on their responsibilities as company directors.

#### **4. Update on Sub Groups –**

- 2018 Annual Report –

The closing date for receipt of returns was 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019. To date 22 PPNs had submitted their annual reports. Those outstanding will be followed up. It is likely that the report will launch in early September, Funding, which is linked to the receipt of a completed report will issue in the coming weeks.

- User Guide –

As of the closing date for receipt of submissions – 30<sup>th</sup> April, 22 individual submission had been received. Those submissions, along with a report from five regional meetings organised specifically for the purpose of facilitating the consultation process will be considered by the sub-group of the National Advisory Group and inform the review and updating of the User Guide.

It is proposed that the new handbook will include templates on important issues such as a code of conduct, representative's charter etc. Fingal PPN will provide a copy of their Code for reference purposes.

It was suggested that once the review was completed and a document ready, that some form of induction courses might be arranged to assist stakeholders, particularly new secretariat members.

On a related matter, the Chair informed the meeting that the Department is increasingly being drawn into the role of arbitrator where disagreements are occurring within certain PPNs. This was not a role initially foreseen for DRCD. However, to prevent escalation of disputes, the Department has been compelled to take on the task. The group agreed that this role should and needed to be continued.

The next meeting of the User Guide Review sub-group is scheduled for 29 May.

- 2019 Conference

Work of this sub group is continuing. Carlow PPN are hosting the event scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> in the Woodford Dolmen Hotel, Carlow. It is hoped that a short presentation would be made by Carlow PPN to the NAG at its next meeting.

- Communications Strategy

It is proposed to hold the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of this group later this month. Group members are Aileen Eglington, Theresa O Donohoe, Sarah Wetherald, Mark

Ryan, and Deirdre Kearney. The Department undertook to prepare some initial papers for the group eg templates for use in the strategy.

## **5. Support Workers**

The meeting was advised that it has been brought to the Department's attention that a number of local authorities have appropriated newly appointed Support Workers to administrative work on behalf of the authority contrary to the advice given in Departmental circulars.

As a consequence, PPNs have been requested to submit details of the appointment of their Support Workers and importantly the duties and responsibilities currently being undertaken by those individuals.

The Department will monitor all returns from PPNs and ensure Support Workers are engaged wholly on PPN duties.

## **6. Training needs.**

Draft training plan has been submitted by SJI to the Department. Procurement considerations will most likely necessitate the Department seeking tenders for this work. With local elections and a change of Secretariat personnel in PPNs, the intention was that any formal training programme could not reasonably start until September of this year. Procurement considerations should not, therefore, impact of the delivery of training, irrespective of provider.

In the context of Corporate Governance Training, it was suggested that Paul White of Corporate Governance Ireland might be a useful contact.

## **7. Secretariat Network**

Election process completed. PPNs and successful nominees notified. At this point, a number of nominations have been received for the role of facilitator. A TOR has to be drafted for the role facilitator and all nominees will be invited to submit their résumés for consideration. Once a facilitator is in place the next step will be to organise a meeting of the Network.

## **8. Update on Limerick and Roscommon PPN**

The meeting was apprised of developments in both PPNs. The absolute need for volunteers to understand Corporate Governance Codes and the responsibilities attaching to their roles as Directors was again reiterated. It is also crucial for PPNs to ensure that Codes of Conduct were in place so as to protect all participants.

## **9. National Community Weekend.**

There will be 800 events nationally over the Bank Holiday weekend, all present are encouraged to participate in or attend events.

## **10. Local Elections – turnover of Secretariat**

The likelihood of an entire turnover of Secretariat as a consequence of local elections is of concern to many PPNs. From its discussion the Group recommended that PPNs be advised that there should be a staggered cycle to prevent all members finishing terms at the same time. In addition, the group recommended that PPNs should ensure that at least one third of the Secretariat should remain in situ to ensure continuity. Changing of Rules/Constitution to facilitate such a safe guard might need to be considered.

## **11. AOB**

- Wellbeing

The meeting was advised that 49 participants from 16 PPNs were involved in 3 events held by SJI. Discussions are ongoing for the rollout of the programme in three other venues – Wexford, Tipperary and Carlow.

- Youth Engagement.

The need for and the means to target and engage Youth in PPNs was raised. It was suggested that the issue might be considered for discussion at the next meeting of the Group.

- Cuchulainn Heart Challenge,

A Business, Enterprise and Citizenship Programme, designed for school pupils and aimed at nurturing them as future business leaders, responsible citizens and enterprising employees was mentioned by Aileen in the context of the previous item – engagement of youth.

- Social Issues Monitor - being published by SJI.
- The Chair updated the group on the Social Enterprise consultation process and the Helping Hands initiative.

## **12. Date for Next Meeting**

Tuesday 25th June Trinity Point 11.00am.