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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS

**Presentation
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BACKGROUND

- The “Public Participation Network (PPN)” is very much based within the framework of local government.
- The driver is a change in Local Government legislation and by guidelines, which have been issued by the Department:
 - Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 replaces section 127 of the 2001 Local Government Act with a new section which enables local authorities to consult with and promote effective participation of local communities in local government.
 - The departmental guidelines set out the mechanisms by which citizens and communities will be encouraged and supported to participate in the decision-making processes of the local authority.



BACKGROUND CONT.

- The guidelines are based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement set up in September 2013 under the chairmanship of Fr. Sean Healy.
- The Working Group propose that a “Public Participation Network (PPN)”, is developed in each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County/City level) to enable the public to take an active formal role in relevant policy making and oversight committees of the Local Authority.
- Pilot PPN arrangements have been set up in four local authority areas, Laois, Tipperary, Galway County and South Dublin.
- In parallel with the roll-out of the pilot structures, the Department has commenced engagement with stakeholders and final guidelines to support a framework for public consultation and participation, to be developed in each Local Authority area.



THE ROLE OF THE PPN

- Facilitates the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies
- Strengthens the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, community & voluntary groups to highlight issues of concern and to influence policy in relation to these issues and to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate
- Highlights the work of these sectors so that their work is clearly recognised and acknowledged
- Provides information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sector and acts as an information exchange and networking hub around which information is distributed and received
- Actively supports the inclusion of socially excluded groups, particularly communities experiencing high levels of poverty and discrimination e.g. Travellers
- Supports its members to develop their capacity to participate effectively and have their voices heard.



KEY PRINCIPLES

- Implement and abide by good governance structures. One way of doing this would be by adopting the ‘Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations’.
- Work in an inclusive, respectful, transparent and collaborative manner.
- Act as the vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies and plans being developed by local authorities, reflecting both areas of disagreement and, where there is no consensus, the range of views.



STRUCTURE

- The Public Participation Network (PPN) will be organised at County level and at Municipal District level
- Each PPN will have:
 - A County Plenary which deals with county level issues
 - A Municipal District Plenary in each Municipal District which deals with issues at a municipal level
 - Linkage Groups which deal with specific issues
 - A secretariat at county level that is a facilitation and communication mechanism.



Municipal District PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK (PPN)

- The Municipal District PPN is made up of community, voluntary and environmental organisations within the Municipal District, and will meet at least twice yearly in plenary. .
- Each Member Organisation will have one vote. They may select two people to represent them on Plenary of the Municipal District PPN. One of these people will be the main *Representative* and the other the *Alternate*.
- These organisations work together on agreed objectives based on promoting the well-being of this and future generations.
- The Plenary of each Municipal District PPN nominates one person to the Secretariat for the County PPN.
- Member organisations of the Municipal District PPN may also be members of the County PPN.



County PPN

- The County PPN has a similar structure to the Municipal District PPN as regards membership and the role of the plenary. Member Organisations when joining the PPN at a county level must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the PPN, which are Environment, Social Inclusion and Voluntary.
- To join the environment Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the Environmental Pillar at a national level.
- To join the Social Inclusion Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion / social justice / equality.
- Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Voluntary Electoral College.
- Each of these three Electoral Colleges
 - Chooses an equal number of people (but not less than two) to represent them on the PPN Secretariat.
 - Elects 5 members from among their own college members to represent them on the County's Local Community Development Committee (two from the Voluntary College, two from the Social Inclusion College and one from the Environment College).
- A Plenary Meeting shall be deemed a valid meeting if at least 15% of the Member Organisations are represented and also only if at least 4 of those present are members of the Secretariat. There must also be an automatic and guaranteed 21 days' notice of the meeting.



PPN SECRETARIAT

- Each County PPN will have a Secretariat whose role is to:
 - Facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary
 - Coordinate activities of PPN and ensure the proper functioning of the PPN in between Plenaries
 - Communicate extensively and regularly with all PPN members and in this process disseminate information concerning all PPN activities as widely as possible
 - Manage the resource worker who will be provided to PPN at a county level to enable them in delivering their objectives
- The Secretariat will meet at least four times a year and will be made up of :
 - one representative nominated from each of the Municipal District PPNs
 - An equal number of representatives from each of the electoral colleges of the PPN, i.e. Community, Social Inclusion, and Environment. The minimum should be two from each.



PPN LINKAGE GROUPS

- The Linkage Group structure plays a critical role as it is the means by which all public participation roles on Council Committees and Boards will be filled.
- The Secretariat will convene these as required to elect nominees to the above by the following process:
 - Notifying ALL member organisations in the County of this situation, and
 - Arranging a time and place for a meeting of **all those organisations with an interest/involvement in the issue(s) being addressed by the particular body or, in the case of places representing particular interests of communities, those organisations which fit the relevant criteria.**
- In all elections of PPN representatives, care will be taken to ensure Gender balance and Geographical spread of representatives.
- All nominations are formally ratified at the Plenary meeting of PPN.



ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- The **Local Authority** will draw up register of groups by electoral college at County and Municipal level, convene the initial plenary meetings and oversee elective processes prior to the Secretariat being established.
- **Local Authorities** to provide for one whole time equivalent staff member for the **Network**.
- **Local Authorities** to provide programme funding for all **Networks** which would allow them to
 - Roll out their annual programme of activity
 - Roll out minimum of 4 newsletters per year
 - develop web site/social media tools
 - Provide training supports for public Participants / Representatives



WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT IN THE COMING MONTHS

- Advertise the new structures in the local media
- Work with Forum and LDCo to develop a comprehensive database and circulate new PPN membership pro formas
- Convene public meetings in each Municipal District area and circulate new PPN membership pro formas
- Complete the development of databases at County and Municipal District area and by electoral college
- Convene first PPN Plenary meetings at County and Municipal District area and assist the development of the new PPN structure

