



Public Participation Network **Monaghan**

Monaghan Public Participation Network

Secretariat

Terms of Reference

2023

1. Background

Monaghan PPN was set up by Monaghan County Council in response to the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Its purpose is to ensure community representation in the decision-making structures of the Council. The PPN ensures that Monaghan communities have a say in how Monaghan County Council works and provides a way for the public to engage with the Council. The PPN is the recognised link through which the Council connects with the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental pillars.

All PPN's are run in accordance with the PPN Handbook issued by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The Guidelines lay out that a Secretariat be appointed from amongst the membership of the PPN and specify the roles envisaged for the Secretariat.

This document lays out the terms of reference for the Secretariat, as envisaged by Monaghan County Council, in consultation with the County Plenary of the PPN originally agreed in 2015.

The Terms of Reference will be revisited:

- should the Dept. issue revised Guidelines, or Handbook updates
- should the Dept. introduce regulations which need to be implemented

The role of the PPN is to:

- Contribute to the Council's development plans and to develop a vision for the well-being of present and future generations.
- Facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and information sharing between the Council and the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors, as well as other agencies/ organisations.
- Identify issues of collective concern and to work to influence local policy relating to these issues.
- Actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of disadvantage, discrimination and inequality and to enable their participation at local level.
- Facilitate the selection of representatives from the community onto Council policy making bodies.
- Feed a broad range of ideas, experiences, suggestions and proposals of the PPN into policies and plans being developed by the Local Authority.

2. Structure

2.1 The Secretariat shall be comprised of the following:

- 1 representative from each of the three Municipal District PPN's. These reps shall be appointed at a Municipal District Plenary meeting.
- 2 representatives from each of the three Electoral Colleges which break down the membership of the PPN Plenary, namely:
 - Social Inclusion
 - Environment
 - Community & Voluntary

These reps shall be sourced via an election process and ratified at Plenary level.

All members on the Secretariat have an equal status.

2.2 Decisions around any proposed change to the above structure are the remit of the PPN Plenary and will be carried by simple majority at the AGM.

2.3 The Secretariat shall elect from its members a Chair, the role of whom shall be to:

- Facilitate efficient liaison between the Secretariat, the Council, the PPN Resource Worker and the PPN Support Worker
- Act as spokesperson for the PPN, when required

- Ensure meetings are carried out effectively and in a fair manner
- Have the casting vote where necessary

3. Term Of Office

- 3.1 The term for Secretariat members is 5 years. The incoming Secretariat shall be ratified at a County Plenary meeting.
- 3.2 Members may serve on the Secretariat for more than two consecutive terms, however an outgoing Secretariat member can serve a third term after first taking a one year break.
- 3.3 If a member misses three or more consecutive meetings, and/or attends less than two thirds of meetings annually, he/ she will be asked to consider their position.

4. Role

4.1 The role of the Secretariat shall be:

- To facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary and the PPN.
- To ensure the proper functioning of the PPN and to co-ordinate the activities of the PPN.
- To communicate extensively and regularly with all PPN members and in this process disseminate information concerning all PPN activities as widely as possible.
- To ensure that PPN Representatives represent the views, interests and priorities of their MD/ Electoral College and not those of their own group/ organisation.

5 Meetings

- 5.1 The Secretariat shall meet at least six times per year, excluding July and August. Dates for the year will be issued to all Secretariat members in January of each year.
- 5.2 Meetings will take place online at 10am on a Thursday morning. In person meetings can be organised if deemed necessary.
- 5.3 The business of the meeting shall include:
 - adoption of Minutes from previous meeting
 - reports from any meetings held or consultations taken place
 - updates on programme of work
 - financial report from Council
 - AOB

- 5.4 In advance of all meetings, the Resource Worker issues a draft agenda to all Secretariat members for their input.
- 5.5 The draft agenda and minutes are distributed by the Resource Worker five working days prior to the meeting along with the Teams/ Zoom link required.
- 5.6 Agenda items are for information, discussion and decision/ ratification.
- 5.7 Meeting expenses (travel and subsistence) accrued by Secretariat members are at the current public service rates and as laid down in the Department circulars. Travel is applied on the basis of the kilometres travelled to in person meetings. Where possible, public transport should be used for longer journeys and claim forms are to be submitted quarterly to the Resource Worker.
- 5.8 Minutes from the meetings will be published on the PPN website within ten days of being adapted using a standard template.
- 5.9 A Secretariat meeting is deemed to have a quorum when attendance of Secretariat members includes one half plus one of the filled seats.

6 Decisions

- 6.1 The ruling body of the PPN is the Plenary. As such, the Secretariats decision making functions relate to operational, administrative and procedural matters. The following will apply: decisions are made by consensus where possible, or otherwise by majority vote.
- 6.2 The Secretariat facilitates the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary in relation to strategic, policy and budgetary matters.

7 Financial

- 8.1 All core costs of the PPN and its Secretariat shall be met by Monaghan County Council, and DRCD.
- 8.2 The PPN shall have autonomy over how the budget is to be spent. It shall be expected to regularly review its budget and ensure that it has sufficient resources to meet expenditure commitments.
- 8.3 All expenditure shall be agreed by the Secretariat. Monaghan County Council shall make all financial payments, as requested by the Secretariat. Such requests shall be accompanied by the necessary backup information to show that proper procedures regarding permissions and procurement have been followed.

8 Membership of the Secretariat

- 8.1 Members are nominated by a member organisation, and are selected through an open and transparent election process.
- 8.2 In the event that a nomination is no longer valid (e.g. the nominating body ceases to exist or the member no longer represents it), then the member is deemed to have resigned and an election will be held to fill the vacant seat.
- 8.3 A Member may be removed from the Secretariat by a majority vote of 2/3 of Members present, where a Member is deemed to:
 - have brought the PPN or the Secretariat into disrepute by their actions or words
 - be behaving in a disruptive manner at a PPN/ Secretariat meeting. Examples of disruptive behaviour include:
 - engaging in abusive or threatening behaviour
 - refusing to follow instructions from the Chair
 - preventing the meeting from getting through the agreed agenda.
- 8.4 Resignations must be in writing via letter or email.
- 8.5 Where possible, vacant seats are filled within three months by election from the relevant sector or MD.
- 8.6 Members are required to comply with the PPN Secretariat Code of Conduct. Any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct may result in the member being asked to step down from the Secretariat.
- 8.7 Secretariat members are required to work in the best interest of Monaghan PPN, rather than in the interest of their MD, Sector or Nominating Body.