



Report of Plenary Meeting

27th April 2022, 7pm

1. **Chair of the Plenary:** Colette Bennett, Economic and Social Analyst, *Social Justice Ireland* (see biography in Appendix 1).

2. Agenda

The Agenda for the event, circulated in advance, was as follows:

- Introduction and Welcome
- Further Development of Meath PPN
 - Purpose, Principles and Values
- Taking Action – Supporting Members, Supporting Communities
 - Building Networks
 - New Structures
 - Additional Supports
 - Where to from here – we want to hear from you!

3. Quorum

According to Section 3 of the PPN Handbook (page 33):

A Plenary Meeting shall be deemed a valid meeting if at least 15 per cent of the Member Organisations are represented and also only if at least four of those present are members of the Secretariat. There must also be an automatic and guaranteed 21 days' notice of the meeting.

With 462 registered Member Organisations, 15 per cent would equate to 69 Member Organisations to make a valid quorum. A total of 64 groups registered to attend the Plenary, with 54 attendees present in the evening. The breakdown of attendee Member Groups by College is as follows:

- Community: 41 (76 per cent)
- Environment: 04 (7 per cent)
- Social Inclusion: 09 (17 per cent)

In the absence of a quorum, the Chair referred to the amendment to the Handbook notified to all PPNs in Departmental Circular CVSP 1/2022 which states:

If a quorum is not available, those present may elect to proceed with either of the following:

Option A

The meeting should be postponed and rescheduled for a more suitable date, no later than one calendar month after the date of the original meeting.

In the event that a quorum is not present at the rescheduled meeting, and provided that those in attendance consist of a simple majority (that is, half plus one) of all groups registered to attend the meeting, the number of participants present will be deemed to be the quorum and the meeting will be validly held.

No objections to proceedings, including resolutions, ratifications and decisions, of the rescheduled meeting shall be permitted on the basis that there was no valid quorum in attendance at the originally scheduled meeting.

Option B

Determine that the current attendance at the plenary is sufficient for the plenary to proceed.

Decisions made at this plenary will be validly passed by a simple majority (that is, half plus one) of those in attendance.

In any event, if over 50% of the Secretariat Members' terms have expired by the date of the holding of the Plenary meeting, or the rescheduled Plenary meeting, whichever shall apply, the requirement that the quorum include four Secretariat Members will cease to apply.

A poll was presented to attendees who were asked to vote on which option to choose to proceed.

<u>Result:</u>	Option A	13
	Option B	34
	Abstained	07

Option B was the preferred option. This gave the Chair a mandate to proceed with the Plenary and for decisions to be validly passed by a simple majority of those in attendance.

4. Introduction and Welcome

The Chair officially opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.

The Chair explained that this was an unusual Plenary meeting in that it was a webinar focused on having Member Organisations make a series of critical decisions for the development of Meath PPN. As such, a series of polls have been developed to facilitate such a large number to input in an online setting.

5. Further Development of Meath PPN

- **Purpose, Principles and Values**

The Chair brought the attendees through the statement of purpose and functions of the PPN set out in the PPN Handbook.

The Chair then brought the attendees through the Statement of Purpose of Meath PPN, which embedded the overarching national purpose at local level. This Statement

of Purpose had been circulated in 2021 as part of a Survey Monkey seeking support from Member Organisations, and again in advance of the Plenary meeting.

A poll was presented to the attendees asking if they agreed with the Statement of Purpose of Meath PPN. In accordance with the terms on which the Plenary was operating (Option B set out above), a simple majority of 28 votes in favour was required to pass.

<u>Result:</u> Agree	39
Disagree	04
Abstained	11

The Statement of Purpose of Meath PPN was passed by the Plenary.

The Chair then brought the attendees through the Principles and Values of the PPN as set out in the PPN Handbook and a Statement of Principles and Values of Meath PPN which draws from the national vision. This Statement of Principles and Values had been circulated in 2021 as part of a Survey Monkey seeking support from Member Organisations, and again as in advance of the Plenary meeting.

A poll was presented to the attendees asking if they agreed with the Statement of Principles and Values of Meath PPN. In accordance with the terms on which the Plenary was operating (Option B set out above), a simple majority of 28 votes in favour was required to pass.

<u>Result:</u> Agree	39
Disagree	03
Abstained	12

The Statement of Principles and Values of Meath PPN was passed by the Plenary.

6. Taking Action – Supporting Members, Supporting Communities

A Survey Monkey had been circulated by the Support Worker of Meath PPN in advance of the meeting. This sought views from the Members of Meath PPN on what issues and policy areas were of most importance to them. The reason for gathering this information was to support the Member Organisations to develop structures and processes which would enable them to engage fully with the issues of importance to them within the context of participation in local government decision making as facilitated by the PPN. These issues were:

- Planning, Development and Infrastructure
- Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity
- Transport
- Youth and Intergenerational Engagement

- Heritage and Culture
- Health and Disability
- Governance, Fundraising and Support
- Community Spaces

- **Building Networks**

Based on the above, the Chair outlined some possible engagement channels available to the Member Organisations, through the establishment of thematic networks on these identified issues, which could be linked to Local Authority structures on which the PPN has representation. For illustration purposes a diagram was presented (see slides) which linked these issues with the various committees on which the PPN is represented.

The Chair presented on the importance of supporting Representatives and for Representatives to provide feedback and engage with Member Groups. Thematic Networks would be a way to foster this engagement. The Chair suggested that these groups could have a rotating facilitator, in line with the flat structure of the PPN generally, but could potentially start with the Representative whose committee is most closely aligned with the issue at hand.

The Chair also presented a draft pathway to establishing Thematic Networks and a draft set of standing agenda items which would ensure that issues of importance identified by the Member Organisations, which crossed a number of policy areas, would always be considered.

- **New Structures**

The Chair also discussed the need to elect a Secretariat as the term of office of the previous Secretariat had expired. The meeting was advised that they would be asked to elect a new Secretariat shortly, consisting of 12 representatives – two from each College and 6 from the Municipal Districts.

The attendees were directed to the resources on the Meath PPN website on the role of the Secretariat; the elections process; and the nominations procedure (see links in slides). The Chair advised that reference to Survey Monkey within the elections processes might be amended to a more secure and auditable e-voting mechanism used by other PPNs across the country.

The Chair advised that this would form part of an interim Workplan to be voted on by the Plenary and, if passed, would be actioned in the coming weeks.

- **Additional Supports**

The Chair informed the attendees that an independent facilitator would also be sought to support the incoming Secretariat to develop the PPN in accordance with the direction of the Plenary and to deliver best outcomes for all Member Organisations.



The Chair advised that this would form part of an interim Workplan to be voted on by the Plenary and, if passed, would be actioned in the coming weeks.

- **Where to from here – we want to hear from you!**

The Chair presented the following Workplan proposal to the group:

Making the PPN fit for purpose requires supporting member input, oversight and best practice support. If this can be achieved, the development of the PPN will result in sustainable structures and outcomes for its members, their work and communities in Meath.

The Chair advised attendees that this proposal would be actioned in the following ways:

- Development of Written Constitution for Meath PPN to ensure good governance
- Development of Thematic Networks to have our voices heard on policy issues
 - To develop and support networks within PPN so that members can working together, collaborate and coordinate
 - To support members to participate in the PPN
 - Develop & test communication tools to connect groups
 - Develop systems for communicating information from communities through the PPN and into decision-making in Meath
 - Consult with members on training needs and develop ways to share learning within the network
 - Establish workable and productive structures for community representation (linkage groups, etc)
- Development of a Governance System for the election of Representatives (incl. Secretariat Members).

Part of these actions to progress Governance would be the election of a new Secretariat and selection of an independent facilitator to provide supports.

The Chair advised the attendees that final agreement would then be sought from the Plenary in November 2022, at which meeting:

- Member group consultation and development work above will be documented in processes and procedures for the PPN
- This will form the Constitution and governance system for the PPN
- The Constitution will be submitted to members for final agreement at the Annual General Meeting
- Election of representatives will take place within an agreed governance system & Constitution



A poll was presented to the attendees asking them to select the areas of the Workplan with which they agreed. If any attendees did not agree, they absented from the vote.

In accordance with the terms on which the Plenary was operating (Option B set out above), a simple majority of 28 votes in favour was required to pass each element.

Result:

- Development of Written Constitution for Meath PPN to ensure good governance: 41 agreed
- Development of Thematic Networks to have our voices heard on policy issues: 40 agreed
- Development of a Governance System for the election of Representatives (incl. Secretariat Members): 39 agreed

The draft interim Workplan May to November 2022 was passed by the Plenary.

Close

The Chair thanked all attendees and brought the meeting to a close.



Appendix 1 - Chair Biography:

Colette Bennett is Economic and Social Analyst with *Social Justice Ireland*. She has been involved in policy and advocacy work for almost two decades, specialising initially in consumer debt, mortgages, and insolvency before broadening her remit to the wider socio-economic context. Her research interests include poverty, work, taxation, housing, Global South, and participation. She has presented papers at national and international conferences and is published regularly.

Colette has led *Social Justice Ireland's* work with the Public Participation Networks since mid-2018 and has been responsible for the following projects:

- PPN Annual Reports 2017-2019
- Creating Capable Communities stakeholder training supported by Waterford Institute of Technology
- Use of the Vision for Community Wellbeing Toolkit
- Research on Participation Levels within the Public Participation Networks
- Bespoke training programmes

Prior to a career in policy, Colette qualified as a solicitor. She worked with a top-ten law firm for 5 years where she specialised in Corporate Governance, Data Protection, Mergers and Acquisitions, and Commercial Contracts. She has provided inputs to policy makers on consumer credit and insolvency legislation and advocated successfully for two legislative amendments in 2013. She retained a practicing certificate and maintained her continuous professional development in law until 2017.

Appendix 2 – List of Groups in Attendance:

- 7th Meath Scouts
- An Taisce Meath
- Ashbourne and District Community Council Clg
- Ashbourne Playspace Network
- Ashbourne Public Green Spaces Group
- Ashbourne Tidy Towns
- Ashbourne2020
- Balrath Wood Estate Residents Association
- Batterstown VEA
- Beechmount Residents Association
- Bennettstown Residents Association
- Broomfield & District Residents Association
- Clonalvy Revival Programme
- Core Ireland
- Cultur Migrants Centre Migrants
- Donaghmore Ashbourne GAA Club
- Drumconrath Community Development Association
- Dunboyne Men's Shed
- Dunshaughlin & District Historical Society
- Dunshaughlin Scouts
- Enfield Development Group
- Fairways Park Residents Association
- Gormanston Community Association
- Headfort Park Residents Association
- How Are You Feeling Today Project
- IWAI Boyne Navigation
- Johnstown Tidy Towns
- Johnstown Park Residents Association
- Julianstown & District Community Association
- Kells Ac
- Kells Family Resource Centre
- Kells Local Heroes
- Kilbride GFC and Kilbride Tidy Towns
- Laytown Development Association
- Limekiln Wood Residents
- Lough Lunasa
- Meath East Community Association
- Meath Environmental Network
- Na Fianna CLG
- Naul & District Community Council
- Navan Cycling Initiative
- Navan Women's Shed
- North Eastern Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force
- Rathmolyon Union of Parishes
- Ratoath Men's Shed



- Ratoath Tidy Towns
- Ratoath Tidy Towns
- Sonairte
- St Andrews AC
- Trim Celtic AFC
- Trim Family Resource Centre
- Wild About Navan