



Bringing Communities Together



**Public Participation
Network Meath**

COUNTY MEATH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK
CONSTITUTION

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County Meath Public Participation Network Constitution

PREAMBLE

Section 127 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 which came into effect on 1st June 2014 has restructured the relationship between Local Communities and Local Authorities and between Local Authorities and Local Communities.

Section 46 of the 2014 Act outlines the New “Framework for Public Participation at Local Government Level”.

The Public Participation Network is a formal network and is the main link through which the Meath County Council engages with the Local Communities and the Local Communities with the Meath County Council. The participation of all citizens in public life and discourse and their right to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities is at the centre of democracy.

The purpose of the PPN is to enable citizens to take an active role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Meath County Council’s areas of responsibilities.

The PPN is the mechanism through which Community representation is provided on committees of the Meath County Council, such as:

- Strategic Policy Committees
- Local Community Development Committee
- Joint Policing Committee
- other authorities and committees outside of the Meath County Council remit with the number of representatives to be elected onto each agreed with Meath County Council or the receiving body. Community groups or organisations who wish to participate must register with the PPN.

Framework of Purpose & Principles

An agreed set of principles and a clear purpose for the Meath PPN will help ensure that it operates in a way which is useful and relevant for its members and supports the participation and representation of communities in decision making within Meath.

The principles and values contained in the Framework will help shape the development of governance systems within the Meath PPN so that network achieves its purpose for its members in line with the 2020 PPN Handbook (available [here](#)).

PRINCIPLES & VALUES OF THE MEATH PPN

Inclusive

- Meath PPN will be inclusive of all volunteer-led groups in Meath
- Meath PPN will actively look to include groups that might not otherwise be included or who might not often have their voice heard.

Participatory, open, welcoming, respectful

- Meath PPN members are willing to work together and are supportive of each other.
- Meath PPN will encourage participation by Member Groups in all of its work.
- The Meath PPN will support clear and effective communications to and from all Member Groups.
- The Meath PPN will support new Member Groups, and Member Groups who might not have a lot of experience.

Independent

- The Meath PPN is independent in its work from the Meath County Council and of any special interests

Valuing of Diversity

- Meath PPN recognise that the network is made up of people and Member Groups that have a wide range of different views, experiences and opinions.
- Meath PPN will feed into local government decision-making with the whole range of views from its Member Groups and their Colleges.

Transparent

- Meath PPN will be transparent in everything that it does and will communicate openly, regularly and clearly with all Member Groups.

Accountable

- Meath PPN will be accountable to its Member Groups by putting good governance policies and procedures in place.
- This means that all representatives of the Meath PPN are accountable and must report to the PPN as a whole.

Equality of Members Groups

- Meath PPN will deliver on these principles and values because all Member Group are equal. No single voice or group of voices will control the Meath PPN.

PURPOSE OF THE MEATH PPN

Cooperation & Collaboration

- To support member groups to work together in common cause and for common goals
- To support cooperation and coordination of work and activity within the network
- To support members to communicate and network with each other

Build capacity

- To support groups to grow and develop through training
- To support members to participate and take part in the PPN
- To share learning and experience amongst members

Representation

- To support participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent way
- To give voice to community needs and priorities in relation to decision making in Meath
- To establish clear lines of accountability and mandate for representatives of the PPN

1 Name

The name of the organisation is Meath Public Participation Network (Meath PPN; MPPN).

2 Mission Statement

Meath PPN aims to co-ordinate and support the representation of the Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors in County Meath. Its purpose is to improve people's well-being by involving the community in local decision-making.

3 Role

The role of Meath PPN is:

3.1 To act as a platform for the groups/organisations engaged in the Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors in County Meath;

3.2 To develop policy and positions on issues of common concern to the sectors and to communities and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented;

3.3 To facilitate the representation of the Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors on the Local Community Development Committee, the Strategic Policy Committees, the Joint Policing Committee, other local government and local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international body deemed appropriate by the Meath PPN;

3.4 To consult with the community so as to encourage and enable public participation in local decision-making and planning of services;

3.5 To facilitate the selection of community representatives onto decision-making bodies and to support those representatives to be effective in their roles;

3.6 To foster, in particular, the inclusion and empowerment of groups and organisations with a focus on tackling disadvantage and social exclusion including rural isolation;

3.7 To support the member groups of MPPN so that: they can develop their capacity to do their work more effectively; they can participate effectively in MPPN activities; they are included and their voices and concerns are heard;

3.8 To support a process that will feed a broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals from MPPN member groups into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers;

3.9 To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and efficient information exchange between environmental, community and voluntary and social inclusion groups and between these groups and Meath County Council and other decision-making bodies;

3.10 To ensure as far as possible that the views expressed by MPPN representatives are mandated by MPPN member organisations;

3.11 To promote and make known MPPN and its aims and objectives, particularly to potential members;

3.12 To develop and promote MPPN so that the work of the MPPN is clearly recognised, acknowledged and understood by local decision-making bodies and the MPPN has a strong community voice within the Local Authority area of Meath County Council.

4 Operational Standards

Meath PPN is committed to adherence of Equal Status Act 2000-2018 and does not discriminate on the 9 grounds as outlined in the Act.

4.1 Working with a community development approach to address issues of interest and concern to our member groups and issues of social exclusion;

4.2 Maintaining open, inclusive and transparent organisational structures;

4.3 Being accountable to the member groups;

4.4 Acting as a vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies reflecting the diversity and range of views of member groups;

4.5 Implementing and abiding by best practice governance structures;

4.6 Working in a collective and supportive way with all member groups.

5 Objectives

5.1 Encourage greater participation in public decision-making which leads to more effective and better targeted policies and programmes at local level and where necessary at a regional and national level;

5.2 Develop ways of working which seek to directly involve and empower groups within their communities;

5.3 Support Meath PPN representatives to achieve the policy objective of the Meath PPN through operation of linkage group structures;

5.4 Act as a catalyst to influence the sustainable development of County Meath;

5.5 To develop Meath PPN as a resource for the community, voluntary social inclusion and environmental sectors and communities in County Meath.

6 Membership

Membership of MPPN is open to any community and voluntary group or club, environmental group and any organisation addressing issues of social exclusion, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community within Meath.

MPPN is made up of full member groups and associate member groups. The MPPN will support Associate Member Organisations to fulfil the criteria for full membership;

Criteria for Membership

6.1 Member Organisations should be in existence for at least one year, should have at least three registered members, should have a committee and should hold an AGM;

6.2 Member Organisations must agree with the aims, objectives and principles set out in Sections 3 and 4;

6.3 Member Organisations must carry out their activities in an open and transparent manner;

6.4 Member Organisations must have a base in and/or be active in County Meath;

6.5 Member Organisations must complete and return a membership application form;

6.6 Because of the separation of the functions of public representatives and the MPPN, Councillors, TDs, Senators, and MEPs should not be the MPPN contact point for Member Organisations;

6.7 Organisations, which at the time of application, meet all other criteria except some element(s) of sections 6.1 and/or 6.4 may apply for Associate Membership;

6.8 Associate Member Organisations do not have the power to make nominations, or have voting rights;

6.9 An organisation's membership of the MPPN may be reviewed by MPPN Secretariat if at any time the organisation claims to speak on behalf of/or represent the MPPN without mandate;

6.10 A Member Organisation shall cease to be a member of the MPPN if the organisation no longer qualifies under the conditions laid down for membership;

The following are not eligible for membership of Meath Public Participation Network:

- State or semi-state bodies;
- Groups who have representation through other pillars of social partnership e.g. trade unions, farming and business organisations.

In the event of a dispute regarding eligibility, Meath PPN Secretariat will determine eligibility for registration.

6.11 Member organisations may be removed from Meath PPN for the following reasons:

(a) For acting in a manner contrary to the values, aims and objectives of Meath PPN as set out in sections 4 and 5 of this Constitution

(b) For failing to comply with the criteria for membership as outlined in section 6 of this Constitution

In the event of it being necessary to remove a group from the membership of Meath PPN, the PPN will act in accordance with the following procedure:

- A proposal to remove a group may be made by the Secretariat or by a simple majority of delegates present at a Plenary meeting

- The proposal to remove will be placed on the agenda of the next Plenary meeting of Meath PPN, and the group concerned will be notified of the intention to raise the matter at least one month in advance of this Plenary meeting. The group will be given the opportunity to address the issue at the Plenary meeting

6.12 Whilst the removal process is being pursued voting rights for the group will be suspended until the issue has been resolved. Any removal of a PPN member group may be appealed to the Department of Rural and Community Development;

6.13 Any PPN seats on local authority committees and other bodies, occupied by a PPN member group which has been removed from PPN membership, shall be forfeited by that group upon removal from the PPN.

7 Structures

The Meath PPN membership is the ultimate decision-making authority.

Membership of Meath PPN will comprise all registered groups / organisations that fulfil the criteria outlined above.

Each Meath PPN member may elect one person to represent them on the Plenary.

The Meath PPN membership will meet in plenary at least twice each year, one of these meetings will be an Annual General Meeting.

Vacancies arising on the Secretariat will be filled at the earliest opportunity, with the replacement being drawn from the Electoral Pillar or Municipal District in which the vacancy arose.

Plenary

7.1 The full membership is referred to as the Plenary and it is the Governing Body with overall responsibility for the PPN. It meets twice a year in Plenary session. This can be either in person or online, as decided by the Secretariat;

7.2 The Plenary will direct operations of the PPN, set overall policy and procedures and agree to an annual workplan;

7.3 At least one representative aged 18 years or over from each registered member group/organisation will be entitled to attend and will have one vote on behalf of their group/organisation. If an individual is a member of more than one group/organisation, they can only represent/vote on behalf of one PPN member group/organisation;

7.4 Decisions made at Plenary can be voted on either by those present or by secure electronic means, if deemed necessary by the Secretariat. An electronic vote must occur within 7 days of the Plenary;

7.5 The dates for convening Plenary meetings will be decided at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary and in the absence of such decision, by the Secretariat;

7.6 Member groups/organisations must receive at least 21 days-notice of a Plenary meeting;

7.7 The Agenda of the Plenary will be set by the Secretariat;

7.8 The Agenda with motions for discussion will be circulated to all members at least seven days before a Plenary meeting;

7.9 The Quorum for a Plenary meeting is 10% of the PPN membership. Secretariat members do not count toward the Quorum but at least four (4) must be present at a Plenary for it to be valid. If a quorum is not present, the current attendance can decide that they are sufficient for the Plenary to proceed.

7.1 Secretariat

Meath Public Participation Network will be overseen by a Secretariat of 12 members elected by the 3 Pillars (times 2) and the 6 Municipal Districts (times 1). Secretariat is a flat structure. Meetings will be chaired on a six-month rotational basis by a rotating Chair. The purpose of the Secretariat will be:

7.1.1 To ensure the aims and objectives of MPPN are met;

7.1.2 To ensure that member groups are informed of developments relevant to their groups;

7.1.3 To ensure the governance systems and structures are in place for the participation of members in the PPN;

7.1.4 To ensure the proper functioning of the MPPN between Plenary meetings;

7.1.5 To facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary;

7.1.6 To support the employment of a Resource Worker and a Support Worker in order to help achieve the MPPN's objectives through the implementation of the annual Workplan;

7.1.7 To develop MPPN into an effective collective voice for community groups in the Local Authority area through the delivery of effective governance structures contained within the PPN model (constitution, linkage groups, etc);

7.1.8 To engage and support the MPPN Representatives as laid out in the MPPN Representatives Charter.

7.2 Secretariat Meetings

- 7.2.1 The Secretariat will meet every two months or as deemed necessary;
- 7.2.2 The quorum for Secretariat meetings is 50% +1 of the current members;
- 7.2.3 If after 30 minutes from the scheduled starting time, a quorum is not present the meeting shall stand adjourned to a date to be determined by the Secretariat;
- 7.2.4 If at an adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within 30 minutes from the appointed start time, the members present shall be a quorum;
- 7.2.5 The Secretariat will strive to make decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, those present will make decisions by way of a simple majority vote;
- 7.2.6 Where possible all reports given at Secretariat meetings and plenary meetings should be written and circulated in advance;
- 7.2.7 The appropriate method of reporting for some meetings may be verbal.

7.3 Election to the Secretariat

There are 12 seats on the Secretariat, which must be filled as follows:

- 7.3.1 Full Member Organisations from each of the Municipal Districts of the Local Authority area elect one representative each from the six Municipal District areas;
- 7.3.2 Full Member Organisations from each of the three electoral sectors: (Community and Voluntary; Environmental and Social Inclusion) elect two representatives each;
- 7.3.3 Election is for a maximum term of three years;
- 7.3.4 No person may serve more than two consecutive three-year terms on the Secretariat;
- 7.3.5 MPPN will strive to achieve a gender balance on the Secretariat;
- 7.3.8 Members of the Secretariat who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive three-year terms on the Secretariat;
- 7.3.8 Should a member of the Secretariat be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, the Secretariat shall contact full member groups of the relevant Municipal District or Social Inclusion, Environment or Community & Voluntary pillar, seeking nominations for a new representative, who may be elected at a Plenary meeting, or agreed through electronic correspondence.

7.4 Linkage Groups

7.4.1 Linkage Groups will be formed to deal with specific issues and support PPN representatives in their role on the Council and other committees; they will form part of the accountability and feedback mechanism for the community;

7.4.2 A Linkage Group can be created by request to the Secretariat from a PPN member;

7.4.3 A Linkage Group, once determined to have achieved its objective, may be disbanded by a majority vote of its members;

7.4.4 A Linkage Group can develop and submit policy proposals, as agreed by its membership, to the County Plenary through the Secretariat;

7.4.5 The Linkage Group will discuss and debate issues of relevance to the group;

7.4.6 The Linkage Group and PPN representative(s) will engage in 2-way communication on matters of interest to the group;

7.4.7 The Linkage Group will inform the PPN representative(s) on the committee of its views.

7.4.8 The PPN representative(s) will provide feedback from committees to the Linkage Group and is accountable to them;

7.4.9 Minutes and proceedings of Linkage Group meetings will be recorded and published as described for Municipal Districts;

7.4.10 The structure of Linkage Group meetings is determined by the needs of the Linkage Group.

7.4.11 All PPN member organisations have the option of joining a Linkage Group (to link with a specific committee/s where the PPN is being represented).

8 Representatives – Criteria and Responsibilities

MPPN elects representatives to sit on committees and organisations on behalf of all member organisations of the network. To be eligible for election as a representative of Meath Public Participation Network a person must be:

8.1 An active member of a MPPN Full Member Organisation;

8.2 Nominated by their Member Organisation;

8.3 Committed to the aims, objectives and principles of MPPN;

8.4 Willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant body that he/she is to sit on;

8.5 Willing to be representative of all member organisations of MPPN, effectively acting in the interest of the PPN as a whole;

8.6 Willing to uphold, support and defend the policies, decisions and position of MPPN;

8.7 Able to articulate, discuss, debate and negotiate on behalf of MPPN;

8.8 Readily contactable by other member organisations.

Representatives of Meath Public Participation Network will seek to:

8.9 Promote understanding of the issues and difficulties facing the community, social inclusion and environment sectors;

8.10 Present the views and policies of MPPN to the meeting and ensure that they are considered in the decision-making process;

8.11 Bring issues of relevance to the community sector back to MPPN for the information of all groups in the form of a written report;

8.12 Advise MPPN of issues which require a response, formulation of policy or other action;

8.13 Receive instruction from MPPN through a Linkage Group/ Thematic Network, Plenary meetings, or the Secretariat, as to how the MPPN should be represented;

8.14 Attend MPPN Plenary Meetings, relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network meetings and joint meetings between the Secretariat and MPPN representatives.

8.1 Election of MPPN Representatives

A current list of Meath Public Participation Network representative positions is shown on the MPPN Website.

8.1.1 The criteria for and responsibilities of Representatives of MPPN are set out in The PPN Handbook;

8.1.2 Representatives of MPPN will initially be elected through asking member groups for nominations and, as Linkage Groups/Thematic Networks are formed, by the relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network;

8.1.3 Election is for a maximum term of three years and no person may serve more than two consecutive three-year terms;

8.1.4 Should a Representative be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, the Secretariat shall contact the relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network seeking nominations for a new Representative, who may be elected at a meeting of the Linkage Group/Thematic Network, or agreed through electronic correspondence with the Linkage Group/Thematic Network;

8.1.5 Members of the Secretariat of Meath PPN may be elected to a representative role but it is preferable that a person would hold only one MPPN representative role;

8.1.6 A representative may not hold both a seat on the Local Community Development Committee and a Strategic Policy Committee, or seats on two Strategic Policy Committees;

8.1.7 Representatives of MPPN who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two, consecutive 3-year terms in the same role.

9 Circumstances for the Resignation or Expulsion of Secretariat Members and Representatives

Secretariat Members and Representatives would be required to resign their position if they:

- 9.1 Are no longer a member of the MPPN Member Organisation that nominated them;
- 9.2 No longer have the formal support of their nominating Member Organisation;
- 9.3 Fail to attend three consecutive meetings of the Secretariat and/or committees they were elected to without reasonable explanation;
- 9.4 Declare as a candidate for local, general, Seanad or European elections;
- 9.5 Act in a manner which is contrary to the values, aims, objectives and standards of Meath PPN as set out in sections 4 and 5 of this Constitution;
- 9.6 A panel system will be in place for 1 year from election, from which future vacancies can be drawn. In the absence of a panel, nominations will be sought and elections held if necessary.

10 Nominations, Elections and Voting

- 10.1 Nominations for MPPN representative roles and seats on the Secretariat shall be invited through electronic communication with member groups;
- 10.2 When the number of nominations received by the deadline exceeds the number of seats available, a ballot will take place either in person or by secure, electronic means;
- 10.3 Each Full Member Organisation shall be entitled to one vote only and must have a representative present/nominated to cast that vote;
- 10.4 Voting can be by secure electronic means if deemed necessary by the Secretariat.

11. FINANCES

11.1 MPPN finances will be overseen and monitored by the Secretariat with an agreed Memorandum of Understanding in place with Meath County Council;

11.2 The Secretariat will submit an annual budget for the MPPN to its members for ratification;

11.3 The Secretariat shall operate financial controls in line with financial policy on the spending of public monies through Local Authority and Department circulars, with the Resource Officer as the budget holder;

11.4 Accounts shall be kept of all sums of money received and expended by the MPPN and accounts will be made available to members prior to the relevant Plenary meeting where the annual accounts will be presented for adoption.

12. AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

12.1 Any Member Organisation may put forward a motion to amend the Constitution;

12.2 Motions to amend the Constitution must be made in writing to the Secretariat at least 3 weeks before the Plenary;

12.3 Secretariat will determine if motion is in best interests of Meath PPN;

12.4 Member Organisations must be informed of any motions to amend the Constitution at least 7 days in advance of a Plenary Meeting;

12.5 Motions to amend the Constitution must be discussed at a Plenary Meeting and shall require a two-thirds majority of Full Member groups present and entitled to vote;

12.6 The Secretariat will ensure that a formal review of the MPPN Constitution will take place at least every 3 years.

ADOPTED BY – The County Meath Public Participation Network Secretariat.

Name	Date

Ratified by Meath Public Participation Network at the Plenary Session held:

Location:

Date:

