



PPN Representatives Charter

1. Introduction

The Public Participation Network (PPN) for Galway County is an independent umbrella organisation and network that provides a voice for all community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups throughout the county. Galway County PPN was established in November 2014.

This Representatives Charter is specific to outlining the role, rights and responsibilities of the PPN Representatives serving on behalf of Galway County PPN.

2. Aim

Galway County PPN will:

- Act as the representative, collective voice of community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in Galway County.
- Engage as an equal and independent partner and asserts the rights of the sector to organise and structure its own participation in relevant arenas.
- Co-ordinate, enable and support the representation of the community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors in Galway County on various public and private structures.
- Contribute to the community of Galway County through the development and implementation of meaningful Pillar Work Plans.

3. What is a PPN Representative?

A PPN Representative (Rep) is elected for a fixed term to represent the issues of PPN members on a Board or Committee. Their election takes place according to procedures established by the PPN. A PPN Rep does not represent the group they are a member of, they represent the entire PPN and are guided by their linkage group.

It is important to acknowledge that most PPN Reps are volunteers and by virtue, this can limit their participation. Though, it is also important to acknowledge that being a PPN Rep is a privilege and with such requires commitment. Potential representatives should be fully briefed on this prior to putting forward their candidacy for election.

3.1. What structures do PPN Representatives sit on?

The PPN has representatives sitting on a wide range of committees across multiple thematic areas. Most of these are local authority based, though as time goes on and the PPN develops, this will widen to local agencies, forums and boards also.

- Secretariat
- Strategic Policy Committees (SPC)
- Joint Policing Committee (JPC)
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Other Forums, Boards and Committees.

3.2. Term of Office

The term of office held by a PPN Rep varies according to the structure. The following applies:

3.2.1. Secretariat

The term of the Secretariat members is the length of the council term and 3 years thereafter. A Secretariat member can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. A Secretariat member who has served two terms cannot serve a third consecutive term. An outgoing Secretariat member can serve a third time after first taking a one term break.

3.2.2. LCDC, JPC, and SPCs and other Committees

The term of a representative on the JPC, LCDC and SPCs is 3 years in length. A representative can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (six years in a row). A representative who has served two terms cannot serve a third consecutive term on the same committee. An outgoing representative can serve a further consecutive term only in the event of the linkage group not having a suitable replacement.

3.2.3. Other Forums, Boards and Committees

As prescribed by the requesting body, otherwise, as laid out above. Where possible, a formal handover should take place between a PPN Rep exiting office and a PPN Rep taking up office. This could include shadowing for one meeting.

3.3. Criteria

Criteria for PPN Reps is laid out in the PPN Election Procedure.

3.4. Resignation

PPN Reps are required to write to the Secretariat of the PPN in the case that they resign from representing the PPN on a committee.

4. Role, Responsibilities and Rights of PPN Representatives

4.1. Key Principles

The job of a PPN Representative can be summarised in four key action areas: Listen, Discuss, Represent and Feedback. These four key action areas are the foundation of what a PPN representative is all about.

4.1.1. Listen

It is important to go into committee meetings with a willingness to listen to the

- A. Business being discussed.
- B. Points being made by all parties at the table.

It is especially important to do this at your first few meetings, acknowledging that it will take a while for you to get to know the business of the SPC and the contributions being made by the other members. Listening will provide you with a balanced insight into what's important and what isn't important when filling out your meeting report, feeding back to the Linkage Group and wider PPN.

4.1.2. Discuss

Having listened to everyone's opinion, give yours. You have been selected to be a member of this committee because of your interest in the subject matter and because you are a member of the community in which we all live. The policies and plans being made and discussed affect the community you represent. Don't be afraid to enter discussions. It is important to acknowledge that the PPN seat is equal to all other seats on a committee. Be assured that you can participate fully and knowledgeably in the debate.

4.1.3. Represent

In participating in this committee, remember why you were elected by your fellow PPN members - to represent them in every way possible. You are not just there to voice your own views, the views of a particular group you are a part of, or the local area in which you live. You are there to represent the views of your PPN Pillar and Linkage Group. This is one of the most important parts of the PPN Framework – that the community sector raises the vital issues at county level with one collective voice.

Representation does not just apply to the time at which committee meetings take place. You are a PPN representative outside these meetings as well. It is important to use your own network to progress PPN issues, as well as using the PPN to widen your network in progressing PPN issues.

4.1.4. Feedback

It is your responsibility to feed back to your peers within the PPN. Feedback is a two-way street:

- A. Issues to be raised by you at your particular committee.
- B. Feedback from the business of the meeting to your pillar group or linkage group, whichever is appropriate. Without this two-way feedback process, the PPN will not function properly and those that will miss out the most, is the community being represented.

4.2. Role of PPN Representatives

4.2.1. Attend and Participate

PPN Reps should attend and fully participate in the following:

- Meetings of the Board or Committee and any subgroups to which they may be appointed.
- Meetings of the Linkage Group associated with their board or committee.
- Meetings of the PPN Plenary, PPN Rep Forum and relevant PPN Pillar.

4.2.2. Linkage Group and Pillar

The Linkage Group and relevant PPN Pillar are essential to the role of the PPN Rep. PPN Reps should:

- Bring forward the issues of the Linkage Group and/or Pillar to the Board or Committee for their consideration, including putting items on the agenda. They are not there just to represent their own group or agenda.
- Work collaboratively with the Linkage Group and/or Pillar to identify issues, research, policy proposals, etc.
- Communicate regularly with the Linkage Group and/or Pillar on matters such as:
 - Dates of Board or Committee meetings
 - Agendas for Board or Committee meetings
 - Reports and Feedback from Board or Committee meetings
 - Items which require their input or are of interest

4.2.3. Networking

Network and work strategically with other PPN, Board or Committee members for the benefit of the Linkage Group and of the PPN, including being able to compromise while retaining the core objective.

4.3. Responsibilities of PPN Representatives

- Organise Linkage Group Meetings and effective two-way communications with Linkage Group members with the support of the co-ordinator.
- Be able to communicate effectively.
- Prepare thoroughly for, attend and participate actively in Linkage Groups and Board or Committee meetings solely on behalf of PPN, leaving any personal, business or political interests outside.
- Work openly and collaboratively with all Linkage Group and/or Pillar members to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc., respecting the diversity of views expressed.
- Put forward opinions / views of Linkage Group and/or Pillar to The Board or Committee and feedback clearly (non-jargon) to the Linkage Group
- Attend relevant training or networking events organised by PPN or the Committee.
- Be open and honest in dealings with all stakeholders
- Build positive relationships with other committee members for the benefit of the PPN.

- Portray the PPN and the Linkage Group in a positive and constructive way.

4.3.1. Reporting

PPN Representatives should fill out a short meeting report after each committee meeting using the template provided. This can be typed or written. This should be submitted at most, 2 weeks after the meeting takes place.

4.4. Rights of PPN Representatives

- Have active engagement from the Linkage Group, including timely responses to issues.
- Be heard and respected at both the Linkage Group and Board or Committee, with an appreciation that they are a volunteer.
- Be supported by both Linkage Group and Board or Committee members, understanding that PPN is a new and evolving process.
- Have access to an agreed outcome statement from meetings which can be circulated immediately afterwards.
- Receive relevant training to enable them to participate effectively on the Board or Committee.
- Receive expenses for attending Board or Committee meetings including any subgroups and relevant training.
- Receive timely notice of meetings.
- Have meetings conducted in a way that facilitates participation, open discussion and transparent decision making.
- Receive support from the PPN Secretariat and / or Co-ordinator where relevant.
- Receive an induction pack for the Board or Committee on taking up appointment.
- Receive timely notice of meetings and documentation

4.5. Non-attendance and Non-participation

A PPN Representative will be notified if they have missed two committee meetings. If a PPN Representative misses a third committee meeting, they may be asked to step down from their committee.

5. Grievance Procedure

Galway County PPN endeavours to protect its integrity, including the integrity of its Reps. It is important that:

- If a PPN Rep feels dissatisfied with any matter relating to their role, they have a means by which such a grievance can be aired and resolved.
- If a PPN Rep acts in a manner that is contrary to the values, aims or objectives of the PPN or fails to comply with the Representatives Charter, a procedure may be followed to remedy the situation or remove the PPN Representative from office.

The procedure aims to balance justice for the PPN, the PPN Rep and the relevant committee.

The PPN should always try to informally resolve any issues, disputes, complaints, etc. that arise involving a PPN Representative before proceeding with this procedure.

5.1. Reasons for initiating a Grievance Procedure

5.1.1. PPN Rep:

- Lack of support on the committee they sit on.
- Lack of support from the PPN.
- Barriers to the fulfilment of their role as a PPN Rep.
- Any other matter relating to their role as a PPN Rep.

5.1.2. PPN:

- Lack of fulfilment of the role and responsibilities as laid out in the representatives Charter.
- The PPN receives a complaint about a PPN Representative.
- A PPN Rep acts in a manner contrary to the values, aims or objectives of the PPN, including publicly criticising the PPN.

5.2. General principles applying to the Resolution Procedure

- The Secretariat will ensure that a proper investigation of the facts is carried out and that the whole process is kept confidential.
- At all stages, disciplinary proceedings will be completed as quickly as is possible with the need to ensure that justice is done and seen to be done.
- Any resolutions will be appropriate to the issue established.
- The PPN Rep will first be contacted informally by the PPN Coordinator, under the direction of the Secretariat, to discuss the situation and attempt to reach an agreement about how it can be addressed.
- The PPN Rep, at all stages in this procedure, can be advised or accompanied by a representative of their choice.

5.3. Stages of Resolution Procedure

The Secretariat is best placed to decide what approach to take on a case by case basis in the context of which the issue has arisen. The following procedure 5.3.1 – 5.3.3 is to offer guidance.

For any grievance procedure to be initiated, a grievance must have been brought to the attention of the Secretariat. If the Secretariat are satisfied that the grievance raised warrants further investigation, the Secretariat will appoint two Secretariat members to work with the PPN Co-ordinator and the following procedure will take place:

5.3.1. Formally meet the PPN Representative

- The PPN Representative will be invited to meet the appointed Secretariat Members and the PPN Co-ordinator to discuss the grievance. At this meeting:
- The grievance will be discussed with both the Secretariat Reps and the PPN Rep given the opportunity to make their own input on the grievance.
- It will be agreed what action or improvement is to be taken to remedy the grievance.
- The time limit by which action should be taken or improvement made.
- A plan for assistance and review.

5.3.2. Review meeting

If the Secretariat or PPN Rep considers after the review that the progress is unsatisfactory then they will investigate further action which could include the conducting of a disciplinary meeting and may issue a formal written warning of breach of the Reps Charter (in the case of a grievance to do with a PPN Rep) or a withdrawal of membership (in the case of a grievance to do with a PPN Member Group) or a withdrawal of representation (in the case of a grievance to do with a committee).

5.3.3. Final action

If the grievance has not been resolved after the review meeting and written warning has been issued, a notice to formally remove the PPN Rep (in the case of a grievance to do with a PPN Rep) or to formally withdraw membership of a committee (in the case of a grievance to do with a committee) will be issued and the relevant Linkage Group (or in the case of a Secretariat member, the Plenary) is notified.

5.4. Appeal of Decision

Appeals will be heard by the Secretariat. The PPN Representative will be informed of their right to appeal, and how to exercise that appeal. An appeal should be initiated in writing by the appellant and done so within 10 working days of the decision. The appeal will be heard as soon as possible but not later than 20 working days from the receipt of notification from the appellant.

6. Amendments

A **proposal** to amend this Representatives Charter may be made by:

- The Secretariat;
- The Representatives Forum;
- A PPN Linkage Group;
- A PPN Pillar;

The proposal will be discussed by the Secretariat and placed on the agenda for the next plenary meeting. The amendment will be effective if passed by a majority of the members present at the plenary meeting.