

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

AND

GALWAY COUNTY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK



Líonra Rannpháirtíochta Phoiblí Chontae na Gaillimhe
Public Participation Network Galway County

EFFECTIVE FROM 1/1/2024 TO 31/12/2024

Background and Context

A new framework for public engagement and participation, called “The Public Participation Network (PPN)” was developed within each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County level) to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority’s areas of responsibility.

The PPN is the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes. The aim of the structures and processes is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, not to reduce or homogenise this diversity. A parallel and equally important aim should be to facilitate the local authority in making better and more timely decisions.

Members of the local community interact with local government at different levels. The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government. The Network is expected to perform its functions following core principles to facilitate active participation with decision making bodies as identified earlier i.e., participation, trust, accountability, transparency, and independence.

Purpose and Scope

To outline in a clear and unambiguous manner the roles and responsibilities of *Galway County Council* and *Galway County Public Participation Network* regarding the delivery of the PPN structures and activities as outlined in the Public Participation Network User Guide and Departmental Circulars as issued and updated from time to time.

Aims and Objectives

To develop a Public Participation Network in Galway which:

- Facilitates the **participation** of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through environmental, social inclusion, community & voluntary representatives on decision making bodies.
- Strengthens the **capacity** of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, and community & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate.
- Provides **information** relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

In particular, the role of the Network is:

1. To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.
2. To identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.
3. To actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.
4. To encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services.
5. To facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sectors onto decision making bodies.
6. To support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network.
7. To work to develop the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community & Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged, and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the County.
8. To support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that:
 - They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively.
 - They can participate effectively in PPN activities.
 - They are included and their voices and concerns are heard.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Galway County Council** will deliver a Public Participation Network in its operational area and undertakes to provide a minimum of €30,000 matched funding to maximise the Departments funding of €60,000, thus ensuring a minimum annual budget of €90,000 available to the PPN. The Council also undertake to provide a minimum of €5,000 matched funding to the Departments funding of €25,700 to employ a Support Worker. The Director of Services whose responsibility includes community development (or their appointed representative) will act on behalf of Galway County Council. Any change in this individual representative will be communicated in writing to both parties.
- **Galway County PPN** will take responsibility for the operational rollout and management of the PPN in County Galway and delegate the Secretariat to act on its behalf regarding the negotiation and progress of this MOU. Any change in the individuals nominated to negotiate on behalf of the PPN will be communicated in writing to both parties.

Workplan and Budget

Galway County PPN will:

- Devise an Annual Workplan which clearly demonstrates how the aims and objectives of the PPN will be achieved within that period.
- Identify the itemised budget / resource requirements under the Workplan and through Galway County Council Agresso System, have in place a robust financial management and reporting structure.
- Have a clear reporting mechanism on key performance indicators and other items related to PPN activity.

Galway County Council will:

- Agree the annual Workplan with the PPN and manage the day-to-day work of the PPN in the achievement of the Workplan.
- Agree the annual budget / resource allocation with the PPN and report on progress in relation to this allocation.
- Appoint a liaison person between Galway County Council and the Galway PPN who is at least at Administrative Officer level.

Staffing

Galway County PPN Resource Worker and Support Worker are currently employed through Galway County Council and the Council will work in collaboration with Galway PPN to:

- When necessary, devise a job description applicable to these posts and undertake the recruitment process for the Resource Worker or Support Worker.
- Facilitate the provision of suitable workspace and equipment, and offer support, supervision and relevant training programmes as required

Operational Co-operation

Galway County PPN will:

- Take out suitable insurance policies as are required for its activities, and those policies will specifically indemnify Galway County Council.
- Work constructively and collaboratively with Galway County Council in the furtherance of the aims and objectives of the PPN as set out in the Departments User Guide and Circular Letters.
- Engage in other activities provided they are complementary to the Workplan and provided they can access the extra resources required to undertake such work.
- Work with the Council on any funding applications which may be appropriate.

Galway County Council will:

- Approach the PPN for nominations for all representative seats on decision making / advisory bodies under their auspices which require Environmental, Social Inclusion, or Community and Voluntary members; and pay expenses to the representatives according to a mechanism agreed with the PPN.
- Offer workshops and training to PPN Members, as required, to build their capacity to feed into policies and plans.

- Use the PPN as their main way of communicating with the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community & Voluntary Sector, including formal consultations.
- Work with the PPN on any funding applications which may be appropriate.

Reporting and Evaluation

Galway County PPN will:

- Submit quarterly reports to Galway County Council detailing progress on the Workplan in accordance with agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Submit quarterly financial reports to Galway County Council and attend a quarterly/half-yearly review meeting with Galway County Council or as otherwise agreed.
- Devise, agree and implement a participatory evaluation framework which involves all stakeholders in the PPN process.
- Carry out Annual Reviews and produce an Annual Report on the PPN.

Galway County Council will:



- Submit reports to the Department as required to draw down funds.
- Pay over approved funds to PPN in a timely way to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.
- Participate in evaluation and monitoring of the PPN's performance.

Conflict resolution

Every effort should be made to avoid serious conflict between the parties, by providing good communication protocols that will enable any issues to be dealt with early and in a timely manner. If any dispute relating to this MOU cannot be resolved by settlement between the parties, the parties shall attempt to resolve all disputes through informal means. Dispute resolution may include mediation, arbitration, or any other procedures upon which the parties agree.

Review

This MOU will be reviewed in writing every year. Any changes must be agreed by both parties.

	On Behalf of Galway County Council:	On Behalf of Galway County PPN:
Name (in block capitals):	Mary McGann	Vincent Lyons
Signature:		
Date:	15 th January 2024	11 th January 2024