

Fingal Community Network – Plenary –
29th November 2014 – Carnegie Court Hotel Swords

Minutes

Minute Taker: Ann Mulligan (Fingal Community Network Working Group)

In attendance

The Fingal Public Participation Network (PPN) Working Group:

Terry Cummins, Abbey Park Residents Association, Baldoyle and the Fingal Community and Voluntary Forum.

Howard Mahony, Bramley Wood Residents Association, Dublin 15 and Fingal Community and Voluntary Forum.

Máire O'Brien Fingal Environmental Network and the Environmental Pillar (National)

Pat Queenan, Principal Community Officer, Community Development Office, Fingal County Council.

Ann Mulligan Senior Community Officer, Community Development Office, Fingal County Council.

Apologies

John Barrett, Ballealy Residents Association, Lusk and Fingal Community and Voluntary Forum.

Sinead Wiley Senior Community Officer, Community Development Office, Fingal County Council.

Also in attendance

MC Shay Barker, Senior Executive Officer, Fingal County Council

Returning Officer Stephan Peppard Senior Executive Officer, Fingal County Council

Full attendance information is attached

Item
Opening - Shay Barker Shay opened the Plenary with an outline of the days' proceedings. Shay thanked the Fingal PPN Working Group for their work both in interpreting the Government Guidelines and developing the Fingal framework for the PPN process in Fingal through the Fingal Community Network. Emphasis was also given to the fact that this was the communities forum not Fingal's and Fingal were only this involve because of the tight time frame required for the PPN establishment by the Department of Environment , Community and Local Government.
Item

Background:

Pat Queenan gave short presentation on the background to the FCN

Presentation attached

Following Pat Queenan's presentation the following questions/Comments came from the floor:

- SPC Format – has the format of SPC's changed – is Housing a new one?
- Why are there places for 12 on the Secretariat? – this explained that the Working Group felt that with the volume of work to be undertaken the Secretariat would need to have 12 – this might change.
- If candidates are elected onto an SPC can they be on another group? – the working group had outlined that candidates could only be on one group however in light of the low number of candidates for the Secretariat, it might be decided that candidates could be on one group plus the Secretariat.
- Some Candidates statements were longer than 150 was this to be allowed?

There was a long discussion around the issue of the election process and in particular voting and how votes would be counted – the following are some comments:

- Why are candidates allowed to put themselves forward to all decision making committees etc – is this fair?
- Some reps are representing more than one group and as such have more than one vote – is this fair?
- The system of majority voting/first past the post – is undemocratic – PR would be a fairer way to go
- Are we on safe ground proceeding with elections in light of the Environmental seats not being filled.
- Has all due diligence been taken to ensure that candidates are not paid staff.

Elections:

Following long discussion Pat Queenan outlined that all procedure agreed by the working had been followed but in light of the concerns of the Plenary there would be a short break where the Returning Officer would be consulted.

After a short recess the Plenary resumed and Shay Barker informed those present that

- The FCN process has always been about Public Participation and it is clear that the members of the FCN have concerns about the election process proposed.
- Following discussion with the Returning Officer it is decided to postpone the elections.
- Shay explained to the assembly the on foot of the decision to postpone the elections would result in the SPCs; JPC will meet now (maybe before Christmas) without representation from the FCN.
- The working group would meet now to discuss the next steps.
- The working group be expanded to move the FCN process forward.

Clarification was sought from the floor around the issue of interim reps on the LCDC – one interim rep asked for a mandate to continue as rep – it was indicated that perhaps this is a question that should be asked of the LCDC and not the Plenary.

Linkage Groups:

The Plenary broke into Linkage groups with the following questions

1. What supports will be needed by a Linkage Group?
2. What method of Communication is preferred?
3. What are the core issues for the Linkage Group

Feedback from the Linkage Groups attached.

Linkage group notes

Water and Environment Linkage Group Notes

Three questions were put the group:

1. What support will the Linkage group need
2. What method of Communication is preferred
3. What are the core issues for the Linkage Group

What support will the Linkage Group need?

- Admin support around correspondence etc
- Calendar of scheduled meetings – both Linkage Group and SPC
- Somewhere to meet
- Out of pocket expenses

What method of Communication is preferred?

- Electronic to be the default method of communicating unless otherwise requested
- Some people would have preferred post
- Emails etc should be short and easy to read
- There should be a link from correspondence/email to the website
- As far as is practical the website should be used to inform

What are the core issues for the Linkage Group

- Level of time commitment
- How do the linkage groups work
- Governance structure of the Linkage group – will there be one? Who decides how the group will work – how often they will meet etc.
- Will there be an induction for members
- Who calls Linkage Group meetings?

Other issues arising from the Plenary discussions

- Emails/information on the FCN/PPN process were confusing and not very user friendly
- There should have been information sessions to explain the process prior to the Plenary
- Confusion over the electoral colleges –
- How can a linkage group change their rep on the SPC – particularly if they are not working out?

Public Safety Linkage Group

The groups had three questions to consider:

- 1 What supports will they require as a Linkage group
- 2 What method of Communication do they prefer
- 3 The core issues for that linkage group

The following is a synopsis of the discussion that took place:

- 1 Introductions of the five members took place and it was apparent that North County Dublin was missing from this linkage group.
- 2 Different level of supports to be addressed and it should be acknowledged that not all members will have the same level of skills
- 3 There should be an induction day for all members of the different linkage groups in to how the council works, procedures / deadlines etc.,
- 4 Information on the working of the different groups
- 5 A calendar of events to be drawn up asap in order for the members to plan appropriately
- 6 Report writing skills workshops to be made available for members, training on HOW the group should operate, Training of Key skills that are required for the groups to function
- 7 Standard forms for giving and receiving feedback from secretariat
- 8 List of all members contact details in the linkage groups to be made available to all members
- 9 There should be new Blood each year – - general discussion took place regarding keeping the group fresh
- 10 Maximum terms should be agreed by all
- 11 For the Public Safety Group it is vital that members of an Garda Siochana take part in this group
- 12 The group need user friendly guidelines and user friendly communication (easy to read and understand documents (Lay man's terms please)
- 13 The importance of the Secretariat was highlighted today and the link of secretariat and JPC
- 14 The group would like text messages, reminders and availability of information through a web site/ link
- 15 Schedule of meetings – mornings / afternoon / evenings
- 16 Accountability of members of the linkage groups

Economic Development Linkage Group

Summary of role of Economic Development and Enterprise SPC

- Updates on the planning and implementation and progress of the local economic and community plan
- Preparation of economic elements of LECP
- Draft plan for tourism
- Business initiative funding support process
- Signage and branding in Dublin 15

Three questions were put to the group with the majority of focus placed on Q3

Q1: What supports will they need as a linkage group?

Q2: What method of communication do they prefer?

Q3: What are the core issues for that linkage group?

Q2: What method of communication do they prefer?

The group had a broad discussion and the following was agreed:

- Email to include documentation
- Open forum to be set up similar to the balbriggan or Donabate forum so people can have a closed discussion with their group
- To develop a drop box and pass on link to members of the linkage group
- Be open to suggestions to meet the needs of the members

Q3: What are the core issues for that linkage group?

It was agreed the following needs to be followed up

- Further clarity of purpose
- Know what is expected of both the linkage group and the SPC representative
- Concerned that they don't have enough knowledge about the whole process
- TOR required
- Query to see if the linkage group has a budget and or does the ED&E SPC have a budget?
- Are there resources for research?
- Is there a liaison person in place who will co-ordinate and drive the linkage groups
- There is a lot of confusion regarding the nomination to linkage groups and spcs this needs to be clarified
- Community groups on the ground should not all have individual votes this should be driven through their local community councils or elected forums as they are not deemed as representative
- Time lines were too tight
- No criteria was set for community councils there is a need for community councils to hold public meetings to Clearly disseminate this information to the community
- We are not familiar with legislation given community councils are well established why not use them as part of the process

General Comments:

- Unbalanced representation
- Fingal need to facilitate a public forum in each area
- Initial information was not adequate
- Fingal were telling us what to do this is not acceptable by the community this event today has given FCN the ownership of our process
- There has to be a way for smaller area where there is no communication structures in place to be supported and given additional support
- New settled people don't have a good understanding of the bigger picture
- Chamber of commerce in every town community and business should be working together
- Business people who live in Fingal but their businesses are outside of Fingal could have a lot to offer, these businesses are excluded from the chamber of commerce

The group felt that it is very important that membership to the group needs to be relevant with individuals who have the necessary expertise to make valuable contribution

There was agreement in the group that the drilling down to local groups was too broad

Arts & Heritage and Community Linkage Group

KEY ISSUES - training and communications?

- “is sport included in brief? “the function and purpose of linkage group should be clear first. Want to tease out this before training needs are identified”
- “wants to back up this last point – as it is a new venture we may have read about it but the first bit of training is around the Act to be sure we understand the structures – what happens when they bring things to the table. Where will it sit in relation to FCC?”
- “legislation is vague – want it to look at what they’d like it to look like. Some way to set up communicating to support each other so that it lasts”
- “what is it we are getting into, terms of reference? Parameters? Interpretations - the rules?”
- “the group is too large – can it be sub divided?”
- “believes that sports should be on its own”
- “back to what it is about? Suggests a website be set up giving what the rules and regulations are – training is very important. Very simple to list off the training and vote on that in the group”
- “what % of people represent sports organisations?”
- “talking about sub divisions of the group may not suit everyone. You may have an interest in couple of things. We have to understand the process and the different plans in place – arts plan, policy plans – what they are”
- “involved in estate in Meakstown to try to get things done. Doesn’t know anything about this – wants training of process”
- “puzzled why we should be here – there are 13 historical societies, a heritage forum – different forums under different departments?.
- “the title is too broad – he is involved in heritage and sport but not arts – wants to break into different groups that has an interest”.
- “if group can’t be sub divided group should get training in their passion – he’s not into the arts”.
- “what training is available? We need to know that”.
- “Queried the arts definition and wants training locally”
- “Child protection issue – essential system from FCC. We need to talk about the visibility of the county itself. Problem with where and what fingsal is. Corporate level.”
- “what’s the layout? Format? Contact?”
- “confused – too many different groups. Ballot paper had 20 people and 2 seats. Wants to break group up and have better representation” “wants to get more from the people who want to be elected”.
- Queried why it can’t be broken up. “again questioned why various things in under this group. He said “persons elected will not represent all areas because some people are passionate about some things than others”.
- Speaker told the group that he involved in community and has seen this evolve – that said this is a change that has been handed down and wants to look at it as per the government level - we have to be realistic regarding battles to fight – if we do that we will have our back to organisations we are representing and fighting the

structure. We don't want to lose people if they walk off with frustration. Because of size of group mechanism is needed for sub groups. 2 people who will be elected has to bring that representation into the policy committees. Process needs to be where subcommittee get system that is not oral. The subgroups to feed back to elected people and then to the SPC.

- "people representing the groups are over represented"

On the subject of communication:-

- "two things
1. Data gave email address – *pat asked the group if they were happy for us to maintain information through email.*
 2. Website – able to read the history, minutes etc. whats happening – if I can't get to a meeting – the history of what happened.
- "who is going to update the website?"
 - "what's the term of office?" .
 - "would it be helpful if initial communication would cover functions – rules and then clubs societies could represent. That way the group invited are informed"
 - 3 years is the term"
 - "the SPC is is 5 years"
 - "when is the next meeting?"

Planning & Strategic Infrastructure Linkage Group

Supports required:

- Training for social media communications
- Google group access
- Information from Council on items such as 'what are the standing orders for putting forward proposals – how many questions can you put forward per meeting?'
- Administrative support
- iPad
- Professional advisors (factual information on specific issues)

Communication:

Two communication channels – within the group/externally

- Forums
- Social Media
- Password for members
- Google group
- Web Page
- Contact list of group members
- iPad/Apple mac
- Conference Calls facility
- DropBox – possibly link this to an admin account within FCC

Core Issues:

- Access to Google group from non members may influence group/hold them back by commenting therefore this should be for members only
- Non capacity for public for accessing social media
- How are the people that are represented kept informed
- Too much work for the secretariat to keep everyone informed and to organise

everything

- Large files tying up Email – look at Dropbox
- Have access to Local Development Plans at an early stage
- Have the same influence of An Taisce
- Master Planning for the whole region at an early stage of the development plan
- Linkage to other Councils nationally required
- Be a voice in the infrastructural work of FCC going forward
- Identify what skills are within the linkage group

These are some of the core issues identified by the group that are specific to Planning & Strategic Infrastructure

- There must be an onus on FCC to link with agencies e.g. FCC should have had a role with the HSE on the redevelopment of St Itas in Donabate – community is very concerned about how long this work will take and the effect on roads etc
- Costs of building have gone up due to new Building regs – engineers and architects must visit sites on a number of occasions to sign off on buildings – effects on affordable housing etc
- Councillors need to be educated on issues relating to building regs e.g. sound, acoustics transmissions for multi occupancy buildings
- Is it possible for the elected rep on the SPC to bring in a technical person to deliver a presentation on behalf of the linkage group
- Micro plastics accumulating in filter feeders of sewage treatment

Transport and Housing Linkage Group:

A number of concerns/issues were raised before questions were addressed.

They were:

- Need for more clarity on the overall process. Overload of information to take in over a small space of time.
- Clarity around the different structures
- How linkage groups work?
- What is their function?
- How large are the linkage groups?
- When do they meet?
- How does each feed in to their elected representative and how often?

1. What supports will they need as a linkage group?

- Meeting Space/Rooms
- Secretary Services
- Breakdown of numbers in Linkage Groups
- Feed back to all in linkage groups the number of groups in it.
- Motions template for linkage groups to forward on to elected representatives.
- The kind of issues linkage groups deal with
- The sharing of information at all stages so that all have the same information
- Support by not rushing so that people can understand the process more and therefore be more effective.

2. What method of Communication do they prefer?

- The importance that information is not in one direction only
- E Mails
- Newsletters
- Web/Video Cam

3. The core issues for the linkage group.

- Clarity around their role
- How they link in and with whom and how do they know who it is?
- The role/scope of the elected people representing each linkage group.
- How information from linkage groups is processed and who's responsibility is it to process it.
- Is there a governance structure for the linkage group
- How their issues/views etc are communicated

Other issues mentioned in relation to Transport and Housing were:

- Pyrites
- Homelessness
- Survey on what the problems are
- Integrated transport system
- Scattered communities and they need for proper transport initiatives
- Free car parking
- Paid park and ride facilities
- Villages/housing estates been under siege with people parking outside their houses
- No cross county transport initiatives
- Bus routes being reinstated.