



Fingal
Public
Participation
Network

PPN Handbook Review

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Background

National Public Participation Networks Handbook

In November 2020, the Department of Rural and Community Development launched the Public Participation Networks Handbook. This Handbook was written following consultations to review the original Public Participation Networks User Guide, which was last updated in May 2017. The Handbook provides a range of guidance, support and, where necessary, clarity, for everyone involved with, or interested in, the PPNs. It also sets out mandatory requirements for PPNs to adhere to. The handbook sets out additional best practice based on experience from PPNs in all 31 Local Authority areas.

Aside from outlining practical measures for PPNs to implement and consider implementing, the handbook provides an overview of the various PPN structures and associated stakeholders.

Much of the guidance and templates in the handbook aligns with that submitted by Fingal PPN when the call for input issued in 2019. The guidebook is 220 pages gives guidance, support and, where necessary, clarity, for everyone involved with, or interested in, the PPNs. [The guidebook is available here.](#)

Handbook Working Group

Fingal PPN setup a working group to oversee review of the PPN Handbook.

The working group originally consisted of representatives of the Secretariat (John Melvin and Todd Pocius), Linkage Group Facilitators (Denise McDermott), PPN Representatives (Alice Davis), PPN Staff (Laura Barton) and Fingal County Council (Sinead Wiley). The working group commenced work on the PPN Handbook Review in January 2021. Todd Pocius and Sinead Wiley stepped down from the working group in April 2021 due to unrelated commitments. The working group completed its work in relation to the review in May 2021.

Methodology

In December 2020, the Secretariat undertook a programme of work to review the newly published National PPN Handbook to identify where the PPN complies and deviates from official requirements. It was intended to produce a report and set of

recommendations for consideration by the PPN Plenary. Should the Plenary choose to accept the report and recommendations, actioning these would bring the PPN into full compliance with the handbook. The handbook also lays out a range of best practice, that while is optional, shall help identify additional improvements the PPN may wish to implement.

Additionally, the review of the handbook would inform the review of the PPN Strategic Plan where some handbook requirements or recommendations may require longer term strategic implementation.

Mandatory Requirements

This review first analysed each of the mandatory requirements set out in the PPN Handbook and made a draft assessment on Fingal PPN’s compliance with the requirement. The review used a traffic light system to rate each of the mandatory requirements. The rating system was defined as follows:

- **Red:** Serious lack of implementation of requirement, attention required immediately.
- **Amber:** Slight deviation from requirement and simple fix available to address. Often requirement is implemented but process not formally in place. At times, processes exist but are currently not active.
- **Green:** Full compliance.

Status	#	Note
Red	0	There are no serious deviations from the mandatory requirements.
Amber	11	There are minor or part deviations in some places.
Green	28	Full compliance with mandatory requirements in 71% of cases.

Table 1: Overview of review of mandatory requirements.

While Fingal PPN has no serious deviations from the mandatory requirements of the PPN Handbook, there is a substantial number of minor deviations from the handbook. In most cases, there is a simple operational change required. In a few cases, minor amendments to the constitution are required. In some cases, the process exists, or existed, but is not currently active.

Best Practice Considerations

This process also reviewed best practice considerations from the handbook, the majority of which the PPN already practices. 12 best practice recommendations have been made.

Fingal PPN influence on the PPN Handbook

The influence of Fingal PPN practice can be seen throughout the handbook, especially in areas where new practices have been introduced that were not in previous iterations of PPN guidelines.

Some of the new practice outlined in the handbook that Fingal PPN has in place already includes:

- The requirement to have a 3 to 5 year strategic plan.
- The publication of an activity report at each plenary meeting.
- That each PPN has its own constitution.
- The PPNs roll out the use of election panels.

Fingal PPN practice can also be seen in the outline of Linkage Groups and Thematic Groups.

The handbook provides a template constitution for each PPN hosting model (hosted through a local authority, hosted through a third party and hosted as its own company). The Fingal PPN constitution is the basis for the template provided on local authority hosted PPNs.

Mandatory Requirements

While this review has not identified any serious breach (red) in requirements, this review has identified 11 mandatory requirements that the PPN may wish to consider taking action on (amber). The subgroup has defined each of these mandatory requirements, provided a status on its implementation, what the group considered as part of the review of the requirement and a recommendation for action, if any.

Amber 1: Secretariat Representation

Outline of Requirement	<p>The PPN Secretariat must contain at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one representative from each of the Municipal Districts in a county (or set geographical areas within the cities), and • equal numbers (but at least two people) from each of the three electoral colleges (Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary).
Current Implementation Status	<p>The PPN constitution does not define the membership make-up of the Secretariat, other than it consists of 12 members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice of the PPN is that each of the Pillars/Electoral Colleges (Community, Environment and Social Inclusion) have an equal number of seats on the secretariat. • The practice of the PPN is to strive for a geographical balance on the Secretariat. However, there is currently no set minimum geographical seat allocations.
Working Group Considerations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update constitution to reflect pillar allocation. 2. Allocate seats to geographical areas.
Working Group Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add the following to section 6.2 of the PPN Constitution: <i>The twelve (12) seats of the Secretariat will be allocated to as follows:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 community pillar, • 3 environment pillar, • 3 social inclusion pillar, • 1 Ongar-Castleknock-Blanchardstown-Mulhuddart area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Swords-Howth-Malahide area. • 1 Balbriggan-Lusk-Rush area. <p>2. Implement this new membership structure at the November 2021 Plenary meeting.</p>
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Amber 2: Environmental Pillar Membership Applications

Outline of Requirement	As a requirement of the Environmental Pillar, groups who want to be categorised as part of the Environmental College (Pillar) must meet certain specific criteria and be approved by the Environmental Pillar.
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PPN applies the membership criteria of the Environmental Pillar. • The PPN does not currently seek approval from the Environmental Pillar for membership applications in this category. The PPN regularly reports a list of membership in this category to the Environmental Pillar upon request and this has been accepted practice. • Section 5.3.2 of the Fingal PPN constitution states <i>“The national environmental pillar decides what type of groups can be members of the Fingal environmental pillar.”</i>
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Handbook Review Working Group is satisfied that the current practice fulfils this requirement through accepted practice with the Environmental Pillar nationally. • To reinforce compliance, the working group propose submitting a full list of environmental college members to the Environmental Pillar following each Plenary meeting.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secretariat submit a list of PPN members to the Environmental Pillar following each Plenary meeting to ensure compliance and approval.

Amber 3: Plenary Meeting Quorum

Outline of Requirement	<p>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.</p>
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PPN constitution or plenary standing orders do not set out a quorum for Plenary meetings. • (Note: 15% of membership based on current membership numbers (438) is approximately 66 groups.) • The PPN constitution does not set out a quorum for Plenary meeting with regard to attendance of Secretariat members. The quorum for Secretariat meetings is one third plus one.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working group consider fifty (50) member organisations a fair quorum for Plenary meetings.
Working Group Recommendation	<p>Add the following to the Plenary standing orders:</p> <p><i>X. Quorum</i></p> <p><i>X.1 The quorum for a Plenary meeting shall be fifty (50) member organisations, of which at least four (4) must be Secretariat members.</i></p>

Amber 4: Induction of PPN Representatives, PPN Secretariat and Ongoing Training

<p>Outline of Requirement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PPN will provide induction training as soon as possible after the appointment of a Representative. Except in exceptional circumstances as approved by the Secretariat for ratification by the Plenary, the Representative must make sure that they attend induction training in advance of attending any meetings of the Board or Committee to which they have been appointed. • Secretariat induction training is mandatory. • The PPN also hosts and makes use of various training sessions that may be relevant to the Representatives throughout the year as part of its Workplan.
<p>Current Implementation Status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PPN constitution requires that PPN Reps receive an induction pack and that the host committee holds an induction meeting with the PPN Rep. • Formal PPN Induction has not been held since 2019. • Formalisation should be considered.
<p>Working Group Considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise the ‘PPN Rep Journey’ record – Nomination, Election, Induction, Representation, Training.
<p>Working Group Recommendation</p>	<p>Create a PPN Rep Journey record for each PPN Reps and Secretariat members, new and existing.</p> <p>This journey record should set out the steps required at each stage of the PPN Rep journey, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The nomination form should include a declaration from the nominee that they will participate in all required induction for the position being nominated for. ○ The nomination form should include an indicative date for induction being organised by the PPN and by the receiving committee. ○ When a committee fills out a request form for PPN Representation, the form should include a declaration from the requesting body that formal induction will be provided to the PPN Rep with an indicative date provided.

- Election
 - When a new PPN Rep is elected, a shadowing system should be put in place with the outgoing PPN Rep (or if a new position, an existing PPN Rep on a different committee) for a transition period.
 - The outgoing PPN Rep (if exists) should provide an in-depth end of term briefing to the new PPN Rep.
 - This is a 'buddy system'.
- Induction
 - Every new or re-elected PPN Rep should attend a PPN Induction Meeting. This should:
 - Ideally take place in a group setting to include the PPN Resource Worker, Support Worker, a previous PPN Rep, a Secretariat member, an existing PPN Rep and a number of new PPN Reps.
 - Outline the role and responsibility of PPN Reps.
 - Outline the role and responsibility of the PPN.
 - Provide a brief to the PPN Reps on current PPN Linkage Group and Plenary activity.
 - Provide a space for discussion, questions and peer learning / exchange of knowledge.
 - The PPN Rep induction pack should include:
 - FPPN Code of Conduct
 - FPPN Meeting Calendar
 - FPPN Travel and Subsistence Policy
 - FPPN Travel Claim Form
 - FPPN Rep Report Template
 - FPPN Rep Activity Report Template
 - FPPN Constitution
 - FPPN Strategic Plan
 - FPPN Issues Paper
 - Rules or Terms of reference for applicable committee
 - 6 months' worth of meeting minutes for applicable committee

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Work plan of applicable committee○ The receiving Committee Induction should:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Take place with the relevant committee official, the new / re-elected PPN Rep, the outgoing (if applicable) PPN Rep and the PPN Support/Resource Worker where required.• Representation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Attendance record at designated Linkage Groups○ Attendance record at designated Committee meetings.○ Reporting record.○ Other relevant activity (submission of motions, attendance at regional event, etc.)• Training (long term)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Put in place a development plan for PPN reps, offering training annually and providing supports for self-directed training opportunities.• Annual refresher induction, brief on new developments and validate nominating group still exists.
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Amber 5: Ongoing validation of nominating body

Outline of Requirement	<p>In the event that the original nominating body no longer exists, or the Secretariat member is no longer associated with them, the Secretariat member will be deemed to have stepped down from the role and an alternate will be selected following another nominations process.</p>
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN currently does not formally validate ongoing association of Secretariat members or PPN Reps with their nominating body – following original nomination.
Working Group Considerations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise annual validation through confirmation with the chairperson. Update constitution to add provision for vacancies arising in this scenario.
Working Group Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Add annual validation to the PPN Rep Journey record to ensure the PPN Rep is still associated with their group and the group exists. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct annual validation ahead of the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary. Validation should be by way of email to the chairperson of the relevant organisation. If the PPN Rep is the chairperson, validation should be to the secretary of the relevant organisation. Add following text to section 7.6 of the PPN Constitution: <p><i>Where the nominating organisation of a PPN Representative ceases to exist, or the PPN Representative is no longer associated with the organisation, they shall immediately cease to be a PPN Representative. The vacancy shall be filled as per provision provided for in section 7.5.2.</i></p>

Amber 6: PPN Staff Liaison Group

Outline of Requirement	Each Secretariat must appoint a Staff Liaison Committee consisting of three members of the Secretariat who will directly engage with staff in respect of their day to day activities.
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN and FCC have a framework for a Staff Liaison Group, however this is currently not operating and has just two members of the Secretariat represented alongside one FCC official.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of reference of existing framework is reviewed and group is restarted.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure three PPN Secretariat members sit on Staff Liaison Committee. This should be formally appointed as soon as possible. Put measures in place to restart meetings of Staff Liaison Committee as soon as possible.

Amber 7: HR Training for PPN Staff Liaison Group

Outline of Requirement	As soon as possible after the appointment of the Staff Liaison Committee, all three members must ensure to attend HR and management training before taking on their role as part of the Staff Liaison Committee.
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HR functions of the PPN are delegated to FCC under the MOU.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider introducing training / induction for the staff liaison committee or consider including staffing in induction for new Secretariat members.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training annually to the PPN Secretariat in relation to the Staff Liaison Committee – organised by the Staff Liaison Committee following the Annual General Plenary.

Amber 8: HR Policies for PPN Staff

Outline of Requirement	<p>The Secretariat should make sure that the PPN has at least the following policies in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel and Expenses Policy • Email and Internet Usage Policy • Grievance Procedure • Driving for Work Policy • Vulnerable Adults Policy • Dignity in the Workplace Policy • Data Protection Policy and Guidelines <p>All policies and procedures developed by the Secretariat must be approved / ratified by the Plenary.</p>
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HR functions of the PPN are delegated to FCC under the Memorandum of Understanding. • Policies have been validated as being in place.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While policies are in place, they are internal FCC documents and not public documents. • Provide update to plenary that policies are in place.
Working Group Recommendation	<p>The subgroup is satisfied that this is a delegated responsibility to the local authority who are the employer of the PPN staff and as such, the PPN cannot materially change the standard policies that apply to PPN staff. However, the PPN in their role should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm policies are in place. These should be inspected by the Staff Liaison Committee. • Provide an update to the Plenary.

Amber 9: Minutes and Agendas of PPN Meetings

Outline of Requirement	<p>Ensuring that all agendas and minutes of Plenary and Secretariat meetings as well as reports issued by PPN Representatives on Local Authority boards and committees are made available in good time on the PPN’s website to ensure maximum transparency.</p>
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility/feature is available on PPN website and is generally not used.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update documents for 2019 and 2020 for Secretariat, Plenary and Linkage Groups. • Provide an allowance of time for updating the website in meeting follow up administration and add to systems in place such as the Linkage Group check list.
Working Group Recommendation	<p>The subgroup considered this requirement in detail.</p> <p>The subgroup recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas, minutes, meeting reports and other related documents that are prepared by PPN Staff should be uploaded to the PPN website and bringing those documents up to date by the end of 2021. • Documents prepared by individual PPN Representatives should not be uploaded to the PPN website for reasons such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The potential sensitive information contained in PPN Rep reports and the need to protect confidential information (relevant to the linkage group or PPN Rep role). ○ The differing levels of digital literacy among PPN Reps. ○ Recognising the volunteer nature of the PPN Rep role and varying styles of representation. ○ Avoid placing undue pressure on PPN Reps. • When planning and resourcing PPN Activity, a time allowance for updating the PPN website should be included as part of the servicing of meetings. This may include utilising systems such as the Linkage Group checklist.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being mindful that minutes can only be uploaded once approved by the relevant structure, except for draft Plenary minutes which are generally required to be online prior to the following plenary meeting.
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Amber 10: Department Circulars

Outline of Requirement	<p>The Secretariat must ensure that these Departmental Circulars are circulated to everyone that may be impacted by them or need to be aware of them and that the PPN is fully compliant with them.</p> <p>If the Secretariat is unsure about what is meant by the Department in any of its circulars, it should seek clarification as soon as possible from the Department.</p> <p>If the Department issues a new circular, the PPN should ensure that any required changes are made to its governing documentation which must be then ratified at the next Plenary.</p>
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PPN generally responds to circulars as they are issued and action is taken by the Secretariat where required / appropriate. • Circulars have not been published on the PPN website since 2019.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish all PPN circulars on the PPN website. • Note any circulars issued by the DRCD in the Plenary report.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate all circulars to the Secretariat and update all circulars on the PPN website by the end of 2021. • Add a section to the PPN newsletter called 'Relevant PPN Government Circulars' and include a link in the PPN newsletter when new circulars are available. • In each PPN Plenary Activity Report, include a section that lists the circulars received since the last plenary.

Amber 11: PPN Staff participating in election processes

Outline of Requirement	<p>In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN workers cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining in their post. If a PPN worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position immediately before putting their name forward for nomination. • is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to Government office, or unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination/election was unsuccessful before applying for a PPN worker role again. • successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before applying for a PPN worker role again.
Current Implementation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is mostly provided for in the employment terms of PPN staff by virtue of being local authority officials¹. • May be problematic in terms of 'waiting to apply again'.
Working Group Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide ranging considerations include equality proofing and how realistic it would be to police this.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PPN, through the staff liaison committee, should bring this to the attention of Human Resources in Fingal County Council and it should be included on file for use in future recruitment of PPN Staff.

¹ Circular 09/2009: Civil Servants and Political Activity
<https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/finance/2009/09.pdf>

Best Practice Considerations

The subgroup discussed best practice recommendations from the PPN Handbook and make the following recommendations.

Best Practice 1: PPN Elections

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various considerations from the handbook in relation to best practice in relation to the management of PPN elections.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PPN should outline the current election practice in detail and publish this on the website by the end of 2021. This should include managing the nomination process.• Candidates may observe vote counting by request and they should be made aware of this. This should be included as part of the aforementioned election practice.• The nomination form for PPN Elections should include a 'declaration of interest' field. Most PPN reps are volunteers. In some cases, it may occur where someone who works in the community sector would benefit in their role, and the PPN would benefit from their role, by becoming a PPN Rep. In cases like this, it is important to avoid a conflict of interest.• Local authority staff should not be considered eligible to be a member of the PPN Secretariat or represent the PPN on a local authority committee due to a fundamental conflict of interest between being a local authority employee and being a PPN Representative.• The PPN should consider how they can facilitate virtual voting into the future.

Best Practice 2: PPN Rep Reporting

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving supports for PPN Rep reporting.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPN Reps should be provided with greater guidance and support from PPN Staff in compiling PPN Rep Reports and this needs to be an embedded process from the start of a PPN Reps term. This should be considered as part of the PPN Rep Journey and resourcing of Linkage Group meetings. The Secretariat should be informed where written reports are not being submitted and should identify how support measures could be put in place. The trigger for doing this should be through reporting on the Linkage Group check list.

Best Practice 3: Secretariat

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation training and presence at PPN activity.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All members of the Secretariat should participate in facilitation training every 2 years. This will provide for all members of the Secretariat having the opportunity to consider stepping forward as facilitator. It also provides consistency of approach to the facilitator role and common understanding among Secretariat members. It is recommended that a Secretariat member is present at all PPN organised events which include training, linkage groups, and so on. This can be achieved by providing a 'look ahead' on upcoming events at every Secretariat meeting and identifying an attendee for each event. This is to reinforce the knowledge of the Secretariat of PPN activity and to provide opportunity for greater networking with PPN member groups.

Best Practice 4: Membership

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll out of associate membership and re-registration.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is recommended that the PPN should roll out associate membership when resources permit. It is felt that service provision to full PPN members should be prioritised.• Re-registration should take place every two years from the last re-registration process in 2020. The next re-registration process shall be in Autumn 2022.

Best practice 5: Meeting evaluation

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporating ongoing evaluation of PPN meetings.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of meetings should be built into the normal meeting structure. At the end of each meeting there should be a standing agenda item under 'AOB' call 'Meeting Feedback'. This provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on how the meeting progressed. For example, if a meeting ran over time on this occasion, additional efforts would be made to avoid that at the next meeting, and so on.• As part of an annual review and evaluation process, the PPN shall conduct a survey with PPN meeting participants to identify potential improvements.

Best practice 6: SICAP

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The interface between the PPN and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PPN should consider how best the SICAP programme can support community groups becoming members of the PPN.

Best practice 7: Sub-PPNs

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PPN may wish to set up sub-PPNs in set geographical area.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The handbook provides for sub PPNs <i>"In cities where there is no Municipal District structure, they may wish to establish sub PPNs in set geographical areas, perhaps based on electoral areas."</i>• The PPN Secretariat is currently considering this more broadly with a recommendation to be delivered at the November 2021 Plenary. Any Sub PPN structure would likely mirror the Geographical areas set for the geographical Secretariat seats.

Best practice 8: Vision for Community Wellbeing

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a new toolkit available for PPNs to develop a vision for community wellbeing in their area.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PPN may wish to use this toolkit when it.

Best practice 9: Contact information for the PPN

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PPN should have a single point of contact publicly.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PPN should reinforce the use of a single point of contact email i.e. ppn@fingal.ie or info@fingalppn.ie

Best practice 10: Dispute resolution between the PPN and Local Authority

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The handbook sets out clear guidance for dispute resolution between the PPN and local authority. This involves local resolution where possible, independent
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Working Group Recommendation	<p>mediation, or where those both fail, a final and binding determination shall be made by the DRCD (page 89).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is not a recommendation, just an information note. This is a significant development in support mechanisms available to the PPN.
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Best practice 11: Requirements of Committees with PPN representation

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a new toolkit available for PPNs to develop a vision for community wellbeing in their area.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN should hold a meeting with committee officials with PPN representation to inform committees of the best practice guidelines in relation to responsibilities of committees with PPN representation to support the PPN Representative experience. The PPN should outline the aforementioned guidelines to committees requesting representation prior to the PPN agreeing to nominate a PPN representative. Committees should also be informed of what they can expect from a PPN representative and the processes in place for Committees to engage with the PPN regarding any issues that may arise with PPN Representation. The PPN should define a process for managing feedback about the PPN's participation on a committee from committees with PPN Representation.

Best practice 12: PPN and Local Authority

Working Group Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a new toolkit available for PPNs to develop a vision for community wellbeing in their area.
Working Group Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN should consider exploring FCC reporting on its work to further promote and support the PPN within its structures. This should not be confined to the Community department. This may be defined in a review of the PPN-FCC MOU.

- The PPN and FCC should set up an annual meeting between the PPN Secretariat and the Chief Executive of Fingal County Council to discuss the development of the PPN at a strategic and provide an opportunity to discuss common priorities.

Next Steps

The working group submit this report to the Secretariat for ratification at the plenary and onward implementation.

Appendix 1: Summary of Mandatory Recommendations

Recommendation	Plenary	Secretariat	Timeline
Update section 6.2 of the PPN Constitution on membership.	Lead	Support	December 2021
Implement new Secretariat membership structure.	Lead	Support	December 2021
The Secretariat submit a list of PPN members to the Environmental Pillar following each Plenary meeting to ensure compliance and approval.		Lead	
Update the plenary standing orders to establish a quorum.	Lead	Support	December 2021
Create a PPN Rep Journey for every PPN Rep and Secretariat member, new and old.		Lead	March 2022
Introduce annual validation of PPN Reps and their nominating organisation.		Lead	Annually from March 2022
Update section 7.6 of the PPN Constitution on representation.	Lead	Support	December 2022
Re-establish the Staff Liaison Committee as soon as possible, including three Secretariat members and putting training in place.		Lead	September 2021
Confirm HR policies are in place and provide an update to the Plenary confirming same.		Lead	November 2021
Put processes in place around meeting reports and updating files on the PPN website.		Lead	December 2021
Circulate all circulars to the Secretariat, update all circulars on the PPN website, include in PPN newsletter and plenary activity report.	Support	Lead	December 2021
Raise PPN staff requirements regarding participation in politics with Human Resources.	Support	Lead	December 2021

Appendix 2: Summary of Best Practice Recommendations

Recommendation	Plenary	Secretariat	Timeline
Outline the current election practice in detail and publish this on the website and additional measures introduced around vote counting, eligibility and virtual voting.	Support	Lead	September 2021
The PPN should provide greater support to PPN Rep Reports on reporting with greater oversight from the Secretariat.		Lead	September 2021
Facilitator training should be rolled out to Secretariat members every two years and a process should be put in place to have more Secretariat members present at PPN organised activity.		Lead	Bi-annually from November 2021
Re-registration of PPN members should take place in Autumn 2022 and the PPN should roll out associate membership status when resources permit.		Lead	Commence Autumn 2022
Embed meeting evaluation into the meeting structure and conduct an annual survey with PPN members on improving meetings.		Lead	Annually from January 2022
Explore how SICAP can support community groups becoming PPN members.		Lead	December 2021
Consider using the PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing toolkit when the current strategic plan expires.	Lead	Support	2022/23
Reinforce the use of single point of contact emails in the PPN.		Lead	Ongoing
Best practice guidelines for committees with PPN Representation should be shared with relevant committee administrators and should be part of the PPN representation request form. Committees should also be made aware of the process for raising issues around representation with the PPN.		Lead	September 2021 - Ongoing
The PPN should consider exploring FCC reporting on its work to further promote and support the PPN within its structures.		Lead	March 2022
The PPN and FCC should set up an annual meeting between the PPN Secretariat and the Chief Executive of Fingal County Council to discuss the development of the PPN at a strategic and provide an opportunity to discuss common priorities.	Support	Lead	March 2022

Appendix 3: Green Status Mandatory Requirements

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN operates by the following principles and values: Inclusive, Participatory, Independent, Valuing of Diversity, Transparent, Accountable. The guidebook asserts that the best way to achieve this is to have a flat structure. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These principles and values are included in the PPN's Strategic Plan and Plain English guide. The PPN operates a flat structure in accordance with the handbook.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Member Groups must be involved in all operational and local policy decisions of the PPN. The interests of the Member Groups are the main interests of the PPN, which means they set the agenda and influence the work programme of the PPN. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN Secretariat publishes an activity report at each Plenary meeting, which is generally every 6 months. The PPN Secretariat presents an annual work plan and programme budget for discussion and approval at the plenary meeting. The Plenary facilitates feedback, discussion and motions from PPN members regularly. PPN members also influence the programme of work through their participation on Linkage Groups.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions made between Plenary meetings must be presented for ratification (that is, approval) to the following meeting. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN Secretariat is mandated by the PPN Plenary annually with regard to the implementation of the PPN Work Plan and management of PPN budget - both of these are reported on at each plenary meeting.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each independent full Member Group has one vote in the Plenary. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is practiced and represented in the constitution.

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN must make sure that Representative roles are refreshed regularly at least every 3-5 years to ensure balance between the need to have some members in place with the knowledge and understanding of the work that the PPN is doing, and the need to make sure that the membership is represented. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term for a PPN Rep, Secretariat member or Linkage Group facilitator is 3 years. The maximum concurrent number of terms is 2. A third and final term is permitted after a break (currently 3 years) in terms.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the Secretariat is being refreshed, the longest-serving members must step down first to allow new voices to join. In addition, no Secretariat member should serve more than two consecutive terms. The PPNs must separate the election cycle for the Secretariat from the local election cycle for Councillors, to ensure that an experienced Secretariat is in place when there is a need to elect new representatives to Local Authority Boards and Committees. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is practiced and represented in the constitution. The separation of election cycle occurs naturally due to the 3-year term in practice.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPN Representatives must provide feedback to the PPN and relevant structures (Linkage Groups / Colleges), within the limits of confidentiality, about what was discussed at their relevant committees and the outcomes of these discussions. It is the responsibility of the PPN Representatives to provide this feedback and to do that as soon as possible after the meeting. Each PPN must have a process for PPN Representatives to report. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN has a PPN Rep feedback report process in place. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The submission of written meeting reports using the Rep Report Template. Discussion of reports and upcoming agendas at Linkage Group meetings. Proposing of motions from Linkage Group meetings.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to progress the work of the PPN, the Local Authorities and PPNs must work together meaningfully to their mutual benefit. The PPN is the primary route by which Local Authorities get inputs for consultations with their communities, and community representatives on their Boards and Committees. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN maintains a constructive working relationship with the council. The PPN and Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a memorandum of understanding in place that is renewed annually.

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While always maintaining the independence of both the PPN and the Local Authority, it is important that there is a good working relationship between the two. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A PPN Liaison Officer (the Council) in place as a point of contact for the PPN on regular matters. Hold bi-annual progress meetings to agree and report on work plans and budgets and raise any issues that require consideration. Collaborate on a range of initiatives, examples of which include Africa Day, Social Inclusion Week, and the Mayor's Awards.
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Organisations and PPNs (and where relevant Local Authorities) must have an agreement or memorandum of understanding in place to ensure that all parties are aware of their roles, responsibilities and boundaries. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is in place.
2. Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding provided by the Department and the Local Authorities is ring-fenced and can only be used for the purposes of developing and maintaining the PPN. The most common usage which the Department envisages for the funding would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of employment of a Resource Worker and Support Worker (full time equivalent) Office space, infrastructure and materials for the Resource Worker and Support Worker Expenses incurred by the PPN in carrying out its activities i.e., holding meetings, training, elections, publicity materials, insurance etc. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out in MOU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A staffing compliment to the PPN as directed by the Department of Rural and Community Development. In 2020 this is a full time PPN Resource Worker and full time PPN Support Worker including through the drawdown of relevant funding. Hosting facilities for the PPN to include office space, storage, HR processes, IT hardware, software, mobile phone, financial accounting and expenditure, stationary, insurance, internal meeting rooms, and other necessary facilities for

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenses of Secretariat and PPN representatives on Local Authority committees (where these cannot be recouped elsewhere). 		<p>the PPN to operate effectively. This is valued at €7,000 for 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme funding to the PPN. In 2020 this is €45,000 for activity such as Plenary meetings, Linkage Group development, Communications, PPN Representative expenses, Training, Consultancy, etc. This funding is separate from staffing.
3. Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All PPNs must have a Complaints Procedure in place. A sample Complaints Procedure is set out in Appendix 2. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaint's policy is set out in Appendix 5 of the constitution.
3. Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each PPN must have a Constitution in place to govern its activities. This Constitution has been developed by the PPN in consultation with its Member Groups and approved by the Plenary. The Constitution should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is consistent with this Handbook and all Departmental Circulars. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitution is in place and is reviewed regularly and by virtue of this activity.
4. Linkage and Thematic Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
5. Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected representatives of Local Authorities cannot be nominated as a PPN Rep. If anyone nominated as a PPN Rep then decides to enter electoral politics he/she must immediately resign their PPN Representative role and the relevant nominating PPN unit (Electoral College / Linkage Group) will choose a replacement. A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local, national or European) should not be chosen to 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fingal PPN conforms to this directive and has measures in place to manage this.

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
	<p>represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.</p>		
<p>5. Representatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated as a PPN representative. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nomination forms for all positions must be filled out by potential nominees. Each nomination is assessed for eligibility when nominations close.
<p>5. Representatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All PPN representatives must meet the criteria laid down by the unit (College / Linkage Group) that nominates them to their representative role. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN Linkage Group Facilitator oversees this process with support from PPN staff, taking into consideration the needs of the body requesting representation.
<p>5. Representatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN Representatives cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining a Representative of the PPN. Once a Representative decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position immediately before putting their name forward for nomination. If a Representative is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to Government office, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful before seeking election as a PPN Representative. Should the Representative be nominated for election, but be unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date of the election before seeking election to any PPN Representative role. Should the Representative have been successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before seeking election to a PPN Representative role. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fingal PPN conforms to this directive and has measures in place to manage this.

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
5. Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting back to the Linkage / Thematic Group and the PPN is a mandatory requirement of PPN Representatives. A report is required from every meeting attended by the Representative in their capacity as a PPN Representative. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPN Reps are provided with Rep Report Templates to be filled and submitted before each Linkage Group meeting. There is a standing agenda item on each linkage group meeting agenda for PPN Rep updates (ideally to note the rep report).
5. Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Travel and Expenses policy of the individual Local Authority will govern the payment of travel and expenses for attendance at a Local Authority Board or Committee meeting. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fingal PPN Expenses policy aligns with public sector norms and makes additional provisions from an accessibility point of view.
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A provision to stagger the Secretariat term of office must be included in all PPN Constitutions. At least one third of a group should remain in place to guarantee continuity. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The constitution has the following provision which fulfils this requirement: "At each Annual General Meeting – one third (1/3) of members are required to step down."
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every PPN must have a Secretariat Code of Conduct to make sure that the Secretariat operates in an open and transparent manner and is as inclusive as possible. A sample Code of Conduct is set out in Appendix 8. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN has a code of conduct that applies to all actors of the PPN.
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at Secretariat meetings is essential. If a Secretariat member fails to attend three consecutive meetings and, in the opinion of the PPN Secretariat, without good reason, they will be deemed removed from the role. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The constitution has the following provision which fulfils this requirement: "Any member elected to the Secretariat who fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings of the Secretariat shall automatically remove themselves from that position and the Vacancy arising shall be filled forthwith by the next available member on the panel as set out above."

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This role of the Secretariat must be clearly defined and set out in the Constitution of the PPN. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN constitution is clear on the role of the Secretariat.
6. Secretariat	<p>To maintain the Flat Structure, Secretariats must develop practical ways of working such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotating the Chair / convenor of meetings at least every six months; that can sign documents etc. on behalf of the PPN provided always that they are mandated to do so by the Secretariat. Setting up short-term task-based subgroups which report to the Secretariat and ultimately to the Plenary e.g., Finance, Communications, Membership, Recruitment etc. Regularly reassessing how these of subgroups are made up and rotating people on and off them. PPN members who are not on the Secretariat are eligible to join these subgroups if appropriate. Having clear processes and procedures for the PPN which are approved by the Plenary. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The constitution has measures in place to implement and reinforce the flat structure. This includes the appointment and rotation of facilitator and the setup of topic specific sub-groups of the Secretariat along with associated governance measures which includes the potential inclusion of non-Secretariat members on the sub-group. The PPN Facilitator role rotates every six months as opposed to every meeting.
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In cases where a change to the membership criteria is proposed, the Secretariat must bring the new criteria for membership to the Plenary for approval. When a group wants to register, and it is not clear if they fit the criteria, the Secretariat can request further information from that group (the Secretariat may delegate this work to the PPN Workers). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership criteria is set by the constitution which requires plenary approval to change. A robust membership application process is in place.
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat must make sure that nominations and elections for positions on Boards and Committees are carried out in a timely manner and following the processes established by the PPN. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat monitors vacancies for boards and committees at a strategic level with the operations element delegated to individual Linkage Groups.

Section	Mandatory Requirement	Status	Draft Note
6. Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The funding allocation in respect of the Resource Worker and additional funding allocation for the recruitment of the Support Worker must be ring-fenced by the PPN for PPN purposes and not used for any other purposes. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is provided for in the MOU.
7. PPN Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPN Workers will be paid reasonable travel and expenses for meetings and other work-related activities that take place outside their home/usual place of work. Such expenses will be paid in accordance with public sector norms. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPN staff avail of public sector travel and expense norms.
8. Local Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
9. National Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
10. Department of Rural and Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department has developed a range of circulars to support best practice in PPNs. Adherence to these circulars is mandatory on the PPNs and forms part of the Department's decision-making process in reviewing funding allocations. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PPN adheres to this.