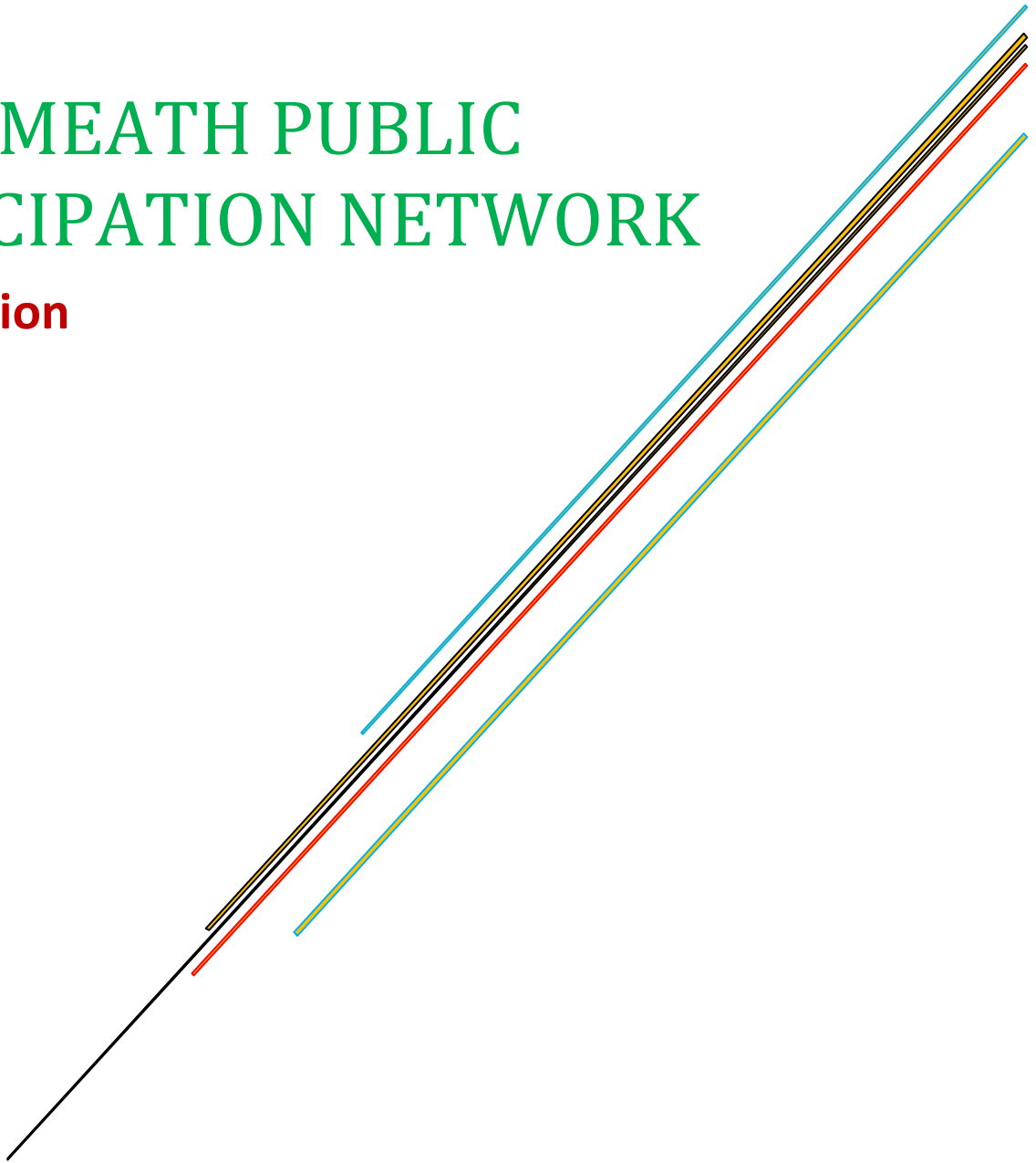




WESTMEATH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

Constitution



WESTMEATH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM ACT (NO 1) 2014

PART 7- LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

SECTION 46 - CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY

2019 Final CONSTITUTION

A Constitution is a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which an organisation is acknowledged to be governed.

Constitution Version History

Version	Date Adopted	Facilitator/Chairperson	Note
1.0			

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1. PREAMBLE

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 which came into effect on 1st June 2014 has restructured the relationship between Local Communities and Local Authorities and between Local Authorities and Local Communities. Section 46 of the Act outlines the New “Framework for Public Participation at Local Government Level”.

The Public Participation Network is a formal network and is the main link through which the Local Authority connects with the Local Communities and the Local Communities with the Local Authority.

The participation of all citizens in public life and discourse and their right to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities is at the centre of democracy.

The PPN facilitates the extensive and diverse participation and input by all citizens into the decision-making process at local government level and their active role in the policy making and oversight activities of Westmeath County Council through participation and engagement in:

- Strategic Policy Committees
- Local Community Development Committee
- Joint Policing Committee
- other committees outside of the Local Authority remit

with the number of representatives to be elected onto each agreed with Westmeath County Council or the relevant committee/board.

Community Groups/Organisations who wish to participate must register with the PPN.

2. NAME

The name of the organisation shall be Westmeath Public Participation Network otherwise referred to as Westmeath PPN or the PPN.

3. AIMS

The aims of the Westmeath PPN shall be to:

- Represent the Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary Sector's interests of Westmeath on Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for Westmeath County Council (Core Function).
- Participate in and contribute to the Development of the Vision of Westmeath County Council for the:
 - Well-being of this and future generations.
 - Social, Cultural and Economic Development of the Westmeath Area.
- Proactively promote the benefits and advantages of Community Representation on Boards and Committees.
- Ensure as far as reasonably possible that all community-based organisations/groups in Westmeath Area are aware of the existence of the PPN.
- Ensure as far as reasonably possible that all organisations/groups in Westmeath Area are aware of the Nomination Process to structures within the PPN.
- Ensure that all Community Sector representation on all Westmeath County Council sponsored Committee/Board are selected via the Westmeath PPN.
- Facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between the various segments of the Community (environmental, social inclusion community and voluntary groups) and between these groups and Westmeath County Council.
- Ensure that all potentially relevant Information is circulated to the PPN.
- Identify issues both of individual segments of the Community and of collective concern and Advocate to influence policy locally and nationally in relation to these issues.
- Monitor and Evaluate existing Policies for impact, outcome and output on the Community.

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- Actively support the inclusion of socially excluded groups or communities experiencing high levels of poverty, discrimination or disadvantage and to facilitate their participation at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.
- Ensure that the three Pillars of the PPN both individually and collectively always act professionally and have a strong collective Voice within the Westmeath Area and on relevant National Structures.
- Support the group members of the Public Participation Network so that they can develop their own capacity and perform their work more effectively, participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities, and ensure the group voices and concerns are listened to and included in relevant Policy Proposals.
- Uphold this constitution which clearly outlines the:
 - Roles of and Interlocking relationships between the various structures: Plenary, Linkage Groups, PPN Representatives, Secretariat, Boards and Committees.
 - PPN Representatives, (including Secretariat and Facilitator/Chairpersons) participation, advocacy, roles and responsibilities as representatives and their responsibility to comply with and represent the PPN Policy or Recommendations and in no circumstance advocate or otherwise be in favour of an alternative personal view as if it were the Pillars/Segments view/policy/recommendation.

4. VISION, VALUES and PRINCIPLES

4.1 Vision

The Vision of the Westmeath Public Participation Network is that it shall be the:

- Voice of the Community of Westmeath and to influence improved decision making in the county.
- Main link through which the Local Authority connects with the Community and Voluntary Sector and the Community and Voluntary Sector connects with the Local Authority.

4.2 Values

Westmeath Public Participation Network is underpinned by the values of:

- Inclusiveness – all Volunteer led Organisations; Groups in the area.

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- Participatory – open, welcoming, respectful, collaborative and Facilitator.
- Independent – from the Local Authority and of any vested Interests.
- Diversity – recognising that Pillars are broad and composed of people with multiplicity of opinions.
- Openness and Transparency – in its processes, procedures, interfacing with member groups/organisations, public representatives, local authority personnel, etc.
- Respect – for all the individuals involved, valuing the dignity of each person and treating others as one would wish to be treated.

4.3 Principles

Westmeath Public Participation Network operates under the principles of:

- **Accountable:** to its members by implementing and abiding by good Governance structures, policies and procedures.
- **Democratic:** in its process.
- **Committed:** through its participation and engagement to attend all meetings and report back to its membership.
- **Communicate:** In a clear, concise, simple and timely manner utilising modern technology as appropriate with all members.
- **Support:** new and inexperienced members to develop their skills and capacity.
- **Circulate:** all potentially relevant information to the PPN membership.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Full Membership

5.1.1 Full Membership Criteria

Full membership of Westmeath PPN is open to community groups and organisations who:

- Have an address in Westmeath and are volunteer led (i.e. voluntary Board or Committee who are directly responsible for the organisation/group).
- Are not for profit, non-political, non-sectarian and non-religious organisation.
- Are independent (i.e. their own constitution) and not a subgroup/subsidiary of another group.

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- Have at least four (4) members and are open to new members.
- Are in existence for at least twelve (12) months.
- Have an appropriate governance structure (formal structure) with an agreed:
 - Set of rules/financial procedures.
 - Meet regularly at least bi-monthly.
- Are National Organisations that are headquartered in Westmeath or through their Local Westmeath Branch (the local branch shall be eligible to vote and hold the representative position).
- Complete the Westmeath Community County Register Registration Form.

5.1.2 Term of Membership

Once an organisation has become a member of the PPN they shall be required to reaffirm their membership details every two years prior to the Annual General Plenary Meeting in that year.

5.1.3 Registration Process

- Prospective members register through filling out the Westmeath PPN Register form.
- The PPN Register form can be filled out on the PPN website www.westmeathppn.ie or a hard copy may be requested from the PPN.
- The PPN Register form is used to register groups for the purpose of membership of the PPN and for the purposes of accessing supports and funding from Westmeath County Council and other agencies.
- PPN Register Forms are processed by the PPN Secretariat, who assess eligibility for membership and ensure the appropriate Electoral Pillar has been chosen (i.e. Community, Environment and Social Inclusion).

5.2 Associate Membership

Associate Membership provides a pathway and a link between key community groups/organisations and services in Westmeath who are excluded from Full Membership, to have a voice on matters of interest.

5.2.1 Advantages of having Associate Members

Associate Membership enhances and enriches the PPN as:

- Membership is extended to groups that do not meet PPN eligibility criteria.

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- Associate members contribute to discussions at Linkage Group level and contribute to broadening and development of the Westmeath PPN perspective.
- Associated members expand the PPN reach into the wider community and support base.
- Associated members provide an opportunity to engage with and inform the professional community & voluntary sector.

5.2.2 Rights of Associate Membership

Associate members can:

- Attend the PPN training and events.
- Attend Linkage Groups and Plenary and contribute to discussion; however voting rights are not extended to Associate members.
- Receive information – newsletters, meeting minutes, etc.

5.2.3 Associate Membership Criteria

Associate membership of Westmeath PPN is open to groups and organisations not eligible for full membership but who:

- Engage with or support the PPN.
- Are a valid community group, organisation or service.
- Work is related, supportive or similar fields to that of the PPN or its members.
- Agree to comply with PPN policies and constitution.
- Have a Branch, Group, Association, etc. established in Westmeath for at least one year.

5.2.3 Associate Membership Registration Process

The process of registering for associate membership is the same as that outlined in section 5.1.3 above.

5.3 Membership Electoral Pillars

The PPN Membership is divided into three (3) Pillars. Each organisation/group must decide to participate in the “pillar” which represents their primary interest:

5.3.1 Social Inclusion

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Organisations/Groups whose main activity centres on working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities where the values of equality, social justice and inclusion are promoted, and human rights are respected and promoting the overall wellbeing of their community.

Example of groups that may be included in this pillar: disability, ethnic minority, family support, urban and rural disadvantage, youth, traveller, women, literacy, social justice, equality promotion, LGBT, community development, children service, drugs and alcohol and older people.

5.3.2 Environmental

An organisation/group whose primary objectives and activities are Environmental protection and /or environmental sustainability and promotion of the overall wellbeing of their community.

Examples of groups that may be included in this pillar: permanent protection of wildlife, organic horticultural and education, environmental sustainability and agreed national organisations whose local groups shall be automatically eligible to join the environment electoral pillar.

5.3.3 Community and Voluntary

Community and Voluntary organisations/groups cover the multiplicity of facets /segments of community life using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, focus on responses to local issues and concerns, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted, and human rights are respected and promoting the overall wellbeing of their community.

Examples of groups that may be included in this pillar: residents/tenants associations, sports and recreation groups, community associations, youth groups, community councils, arts groups, active retirement groups and self-help groups etc.

6. STRUCTURE and MANAGEMENT

The current structure is “flat” (flat = meaning rotating Facilitator/Chairperson/chairperson) in accordance with Government Policy and composed of:

- Plenary Group
- Secretariat

- Linkage Groups

It is therefore imperative that strong and clear governance procedures are in place that respect the flat structure and provide the environment for the PPN to conduct its business in an efficient, effective, and accountable manner.

6.1 Plenary

- The full Membership (excluding Associate Members) is referred to as the Plenary which is the Governing Body with overall responsibility for the Network and shall meet at least twice (2) a year in Plenary Meeting. One of the Meetings includes the Annual General Meeting of the Membership.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects a Secretariat which through the diversity of its membership is representative of the three (3) Pillars, where vacancies have risen.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects representatives to all committees/boards, where vacancies have risen.
- At least one (1) member from each Registered Group/Organisation holding Full Membership shall be entitled to attend and shall have one (1) vote on behalf of their organisation.
- The dates for convening Plenary Meetings shall be decided by the Secretariat.
- Notice of Plenary Meetings shall be circulated to all members not less than one month prior to the date of such Meeting.
- The Agenda shall be set by the Secretariat. Items and motions for discussion shall be forwarded by members at least 10 days prior to the meeting.
- All Plenaries shall be conducted under Standing Orders Procedures – in consultation with members. See Appendix 1 for Standing Orders (page 33).

6.1.1 Extraordinary General Meetings

Extraordinary General Meeting of full Members shall be held at any time on the decision of the Secretariat or on receipt by the Secretariat of a concise request of not more than one (1) A4 page signed by 30 full Members (excluding Associated Members) to convene such a meeting.

The Secretariat shall decide within five (5) working days of receipt of such request the date, time, and place such a meeting shall be held which shall be not more than twenty-one (21) working days following receipt of the request by Secretariat.

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The Notice to members shall state:

- Date, time and place of the meeting.
- Business to be transacted.
- Text of original request/proposal.

The Facilitator/Chairperson/chairperson of the Secretariat for the time being shall act as the Facilitator/Chairperson of the Extraordinary General Meeting or where the Facilitator/Chairperson fails to act the Secretariat shall appoint one of its Members to act as Facilitator/Chairperson. Where the Secretariat fails to appoint a Facilitator/Chairperson, the Extraordinary General meeting shall appoint a Facilitator/Chairperson by show of hands or Ballot by simple majority vote.

Where the Secretariat fails or omits to comply with such request to hold a meeting or Secretariat has resigned in block, then the member organisation who initiated the request in the first instance shall convene such an Extraordinary meeting at a date, time, and place stipulated by them and only on the original request and such notice shall state the Business to be transacted and Text of original request/proposal.

A poll demanded regarding the election of a Facilitator/Chairperson for the meeting by any member shall be taken forthwith.

6.1.2 Procedure at the Plenary or EGMs

Any Motion proposed and seconded **at the meeting** becomes a resolution and shall take precedence in the discussion and shall be immediately placed before the meeting for discussion and resolution.

The Facilitator/Chairperson shall put the Resolution to a Vote when of the view that such is the appropriate procedure at that point and such decision taken by Facilitator/Chairperson shall be final and the Resolution shall then be placed before the Meeting for decision by simple majority – a ballot or show of hands.

Where a member proposes that the “Resolution be now put before the meeting” and such a proposal is seconded then that Resolution takes precedence at that point of the meeting and such resolution placed before the meeting for decision by simple majority – a ballot or show of hands.

Should the resolution be carried by simple majority either by show of hands or ballot then the Original Resolution or as amended by the meeting shall be placed before the meeting for decision by simple majority without any further debate – a ballot or show of hands.

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Should a secret ballot (poll) be called for by three (3) or more members then a Ballot shall precede with Tellers being appointed with the process being overseen by the Secretariat, or where the Secretariat is not available, through the election of a Standing Orders Committee for that meeting only.

In the event of equality of Votes the Facilitator/Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote (should that person choose to use such a vote).

Where a Resolution is not carried due to an equality of votes or is lost, the same resolution shall not be placed before the membership for a period of six (6) months.

A demand for a secret ballot may be withdrawn by the person or persons who made the demand.

6.1.2 Qualification of Voter

An objection in relation to the qualification of any voter must be raised prior to ballot being taken. Any such objection made in due time shall be referred to Facilitator/Chairperson of the meeting whose decision shall be final and conclusive.

6.1.3 Record of Voting

A clear record of voting result shall be signed by Tellers and countersigned by Facilitator/Chairperson of the meeting.

6.1.4 Tellers

Tellers shall be appointed to count Votes. Anyone seeking to be elected to a position shall be disqualified from being appointed a teller.

6.1.5 Adjournment of Meeting

Where a proposal is made by a member to adjourn the meeting and such proposal is seconded then that proposal shall be taken forthwith without further debate and placed before the meeting for resolution by simple majority.

Where such a proposal is carried, the meeting shall by simple majority decide when (date /time/place) the meeting as adjourned is reconvened.

6.1.6 Suspension of Standing Orders

Standing orders as regards any meeting may be suspended by simple majority of members present to address urgent item of business.

6.2 Secretariat

- The Secretariat consists of eight (8) members (2 from each Pillar and 1 from each Municipal District).
- Term of office of Secretariat is 5 years in line with local authority
- A member may not serve on the Secretariat for more than ten (10) consecutive Years and having so served shall not be entitled to offer themselves for Election for a further Five (5) years.
- The quorum for Secretariat meetings shall be half plus one (1).
- For membership of the Secretariat, an individual must be attached to and nominated by a PPN member organisation of a relevant electoral pillar
- A panel shall be compiled from the next highest candidates for the purpose of filling vacancies which may occur in the Secretariat in respect of that pillar between Plenary (one of which to be AGM) of the PPN.
- Any Vacancy arising on the Secretariat between the Annual Electoral Process shall be filled by the next highest candidate on the aforementioned panel willing to serve on the Secretariat.
- Secretariat shall meet at least ten (10) times per annum.
- Secretariat Members are expected to attend the two (2) Plenary Meetings in the year.
- The Secretariat shall hold ordinary meetings at location around the county to be decided by the Secretariat.
- All Secretariat members should notify the Resource Worker of their availability to attend or not at meetings
- Any Member elected to the Secretariat who fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings of the Secretariat without a valid reason 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.
- The Secretariat shall have authority to fill any temporary vacancy being 3 months or more arising from a member being absent on – Leave of Absence, Study Leave, Maternity Leave, etc.

6.2.1 Emergency and Other Meetings of the Secretariat

Emergency meetings of the Secretariat shall be held where not less than five (5) members of the Secretariat sign a request that the Secretariat be convened setting out clearly the reasons for such a meeting. Such a request shall be delivered / sent to the Facilitator responsible for the operation of Secretariat. On receipt of such request the Facilitator shall

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immediately arrange for the holding of the meeting within seven (7) days of the date of such receipt.

Other meetings of the Secretariat shall be held where the Facilitator is of the opinion that a situation has arisen for the holding of such a meeting.

6.2.2 Responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is the key day-to-day administrative body within the PPN Structure:

- Ensures the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenary meetings and in accordance with the constitution.
- Manages the PPN budget including on-going financial matters and decisions.
- Ensures that PPN processes work, as far as possible / practicable, in accordance with this Constitution and in an efficient and effective manner.
- Monitors on an on-going basis the activities of the PPN network and proposes remedial action (initially to the parties in question, and subsequently to the relevant Plenary) should these activities become problematic, with reference to the Constitution, the common good and reputation of the PPN network as a whole.
- Monitors the correct functioning of linkage groups.
- Manages the development and implementation of the PPN's strategic plan.
- Establishes sub-groups to address in detail certain defined matters/issues that arise from time to time.
- Facilitates the implementation of decisions of the Plenary.
- Ensures appropriate administrative support is available for the efficient functioning of the PPN, including considering recruiting support through work placement schemes funded by public monies.
- Determines the time and place of AGM (Plenary)
- Cooperating with any National Advisory Body/Group established for Monitoring and Evaluation of PPN'S recommendations or guidelines issued by such bodies/groups.
- Agrees an Annual Work Plan namely:
 - Participation in Decision Making and Representation.
 - Capacity building.
 - Information Sharing and Communication.
 - Other activities as agreed.
- Appoints a Facilitator of Secretariat Meetings with a term of 1 month (until next Secretariat meeting). As far as possible, the position of Facilitator should rotate to ensure Secretariat members acquire relevant experience of this function.

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- Manages the work of the Resource Worker, who acts as the secretary of the Secretariat, and who maintains the minutes, correspondence regarding all Secretariat meetings and Plenaries.
- Reviews and approves the minutes of each previous meeting as the first item of the agenda of each Secretariat meeting.
- Promotes the Network amongst its Members and in the wider community.
- Administers the PPN in accordance with best practice and to the highest possible standard (to be agreed between the members, and if necessary approved by the Plenary).

6.2.3 General Purposes Subcommittee

Following the annual general meeting of the Plenary, the Secretariat shall elect a General Purposes Subcommittee from within its members consisting of three (3) representatives to hear any appeal or complaint regarding processes and procedures of the PPN.

6.2.4 Role of the Secretariat Facilitator

As Facilitator of the Secretariat, the Facilitator shall:

- Agree the framework/ environment with the resource worker/ secretary for Secretariat meetings (e.g. timeframe, location, facilities etc.).
- Agree the agenda of each Secretariat meeting.
- Manage the progression of agenda items of each Secretariat meeting in terms of the items under discussion, the reaching of decisions and the time allocated.
- Review, agree and ensure the distribution in a timely fashion draft minutes in conjunction with the Resource Worker.
- Ensure that approved minutes are available as appropriate to the relevant parties.
- Normally act as the primary representative of the PPN network to external bodies or in emergency situations. This role may be delegated in given circumstances.
- Sign off on official PPN correspondence.
- Facilitate the Plenary meeting that takes at the end of their term.

If the Secretariat is dissatisfied with the conduct or performance of the Facilitator, the Facilitator may be voted out of that role during the course of a scheduled Secretariat meeting, by notification in writing prior to such meeting.

6.2.4 Role of PPN Staff

The PPN Staff consists of the PPN Resource Worker and any other staff member as provided for by the Department of Rural and Community Development or Westmeath County Council. Under the direction of the Secretariat, the PPN Staff shall:

- Be employed by the Local Authority in accordance with Local Government requirements.
- Manage the Membership Database including bi-annual re-registration of Groups/Organisations.
- Maintain accurate records of PPN Business (hard and soft copies) including minutes of meetings and associated correspondence.
- Prepare and circulate agendas for meetings of the Secretariat and Plenary.
- Verify nominees to ensure they meet the criteria and circulate to the Secretariat.
- Circulate the details of Nominees to Linkage Groups for consideration prior to the Election.
- Act as a point of contact on behalf of the PPN.
- Process all the correspondence of the PPN through distributing copies and drafting agreed responses.
- Support and monitor the work of Network Representatives.
- Communicate regularly with the PPN membership and disseminates information on PPN activities.
- Maintain records of the length of service of each of the members of the Secretariat and PPN representatives

The Resource Worker is the core staff member of the PPN and as such services the Secretariat.

6.2.1 Linkage Groups (Thematic Groups)

Linkage Groups bring together stakeholder organisations/Groups who are members of the PPN with a common interest to discuss their diverse views and interests in a specific policy area. This is a pathway for such organisations/groups to have a real input into policy in their respective area of operation. Linkage Groups are an essential component of the work of the PPN.

Linkage Groups operate under the auspices of the PPN Plenary, and report to the PPN Secretariat, Linkage Groups are independent networks of community groups who are

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interested in a common theme such as Arts, Community, Environment, Housing, Planning, Social Inclusion, Transport or Tourism (and more).

Linkage Groups work to influence change in their thematic area. They do this through advocating for policy changes on behalf of the community through engaging with Westmeath County Council and other bodies appropriate to the issue or subject matter of advocacy.

6.3.1 Aim

The role of the Linkage Group is to:

- Act as the representative, collective voice of community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in Westmeath under the relevant thematic area.
- Engage as an equal and independent partner and assert 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 and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion Pillars in Westmeath on various public and private structures.
- To give community organisations with similar interests the opportunity to meet/network share ideas and issues and feed into Policies that affect them.
- Develop positions on policies relevant to the work of Linkage group.
- Nominate/ elect Linkage group members to relevant decision-making body/committee.
- Support the PPN Representative on the decision-making body – members shall give direction to the Representative on the position they are to take on issues.
- Operate as a reference group on all issues relating to the group.

6.3.2 Membership

- Organisations/Groups registered with the PPN are entitled to become a member of any Linkage Groups.
- On completion of the Registration Form, organisations shall specify which Linkage Group their organisation may wish to be a member of.
- Linkage Group membership is open to all members, year-round.
- The Secretariat shall encourage members to participate in Linkage Groups at least once annually.

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- PPN Member groups are encouraged to send different representatives to multiple Linkage Groups (i.e. The PPN member does not have to be the same person from the same organisation representing that organisation at all Linkage Groups).

6.3.3 Current Linkage Groups

The three linkage groups are as follows

1. Linkage Group 1 for; Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Strategic Policy Committees (SPC), Public Participation Network Secretariat (PPN), Westmeath Community Development etc
2. Linkage Group 2 for; Midland Regional Alcohol and Drugs Taskforce (MRADTF), Joint Policing Committee (JPC) etc
3. Linkage Group 3 for; County Childcare Committee (CCC), Regional Sports Centre, Integrated Transport Initiative, Westmeath Sports Partnership etc

The Secretariat may decide to establish new Linkage Groups. Linkage Groups may also be established on an issue basis or as requested.

6.3.4 Role of Linkage Groups

- Facilitate debate among common interest groups and develop positions on policies relevant to the work of Linkage group.
- Nominate community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental representatives onto decision making bodies, where relevant.
- Report on Linkage Group progress to the Secretariat, Plenary, and to other interested parties when required.
- Support and give direction to the PPN Representatives who represent the linkage group on decision making bodies.
- Facilitate two-way feedback between PPN representatives and the linkage group.
- Facilitate the sharing of information with interested PPN members / linkage group members from decision making bodies.
- Operate as a reference group on the all issues relating to the group.
- Use, review and update the PPN Community Issues Paper on an on-going basis, at least annually.
- Develop a work-plan to include specific projects that can be achieved at a local level, and which benefit the local community.
- Apply to the PPN Linkage Group fund for manage specific action-based projects.
- Facilitate engagement with relevant agencies.

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- Facilitate and enable organisations/groups to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the Local Government System and not to reduce or homogenise this diversity
- Facilitate member organisation/groups to gain a deeper understanding of the Local Policy Process
- Discuss and debate the matters being discussed by the Board or Committee, to inform the representative(s), and where relevant to prioritise and develop policy positions
- To work with the PPN Secretariat and Report to the Plenary as relevant.
- Elect PPN representatives to Boards or Committees on Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for Westmeath County Council
- Receive feedback from those representatives and direct their activity
- May also set policy priorities and input into consultations etc. on behalf of PPN
- Open to receiving new members always.
- Agree and implement a way of communicating with the representative(s) and with each other, which is effective and realistic.
- To work collaboratively with other Linkage Groups and representatives in furtherance of the aims of the PPN.
- The roles and correct Functioning of Linkage Groups is overseen and managed by the Secretariat.

6.3.5 Responsibilities of the Linkage Group

Responsibilities of the Linkage Groups members are to:

- To operate in accordance with the principles and values of PPN.
- Make themselves aware of what the Board or Committee they are linked to can and cannot do, having realistic expectations of what a representative can achieve, and understanding confidentiality issues which may arise.
- Be open to new organisations joining the Linkage Group, and to actively seek the input of all groups who have an interest in the area, particularly those who are traditionally excluded.
- Communicate and engage clearly and openly with the representative and other Linkage Group members, recognising that there may be differing views expressed on issues, and that the representative must bring the diversity of views to the Board or Committee.
- Take the time to read / absorb / understand communications that are received.

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- Seek to develop realistic policy proposals to address issues raised and support the representative to bring views forward, by providing relevant facts and research where possible.
- Feed back to their member groups on the work of the Linkage Group and Board or Committee.
- Inform the wider PPN of key issues and policy positions.
- Keep records of dates, attendance, outputs etc. for meetings (virtual or face to face).
- Minutes of meetings shall be approved at the next meeting and signed and dated by the Facilitator/Chairperson.

6.3.6 Rights of the Linkage Group members are to:

- Receive relevant information about the work of the Board or Committee to help them to participate fully.
- Receive regular communications (at least as frequently as Board or Committee meetings are held) from the representative on matters such as:
 - Dates of Board or Committee meetings.
 - Agendas for Board or Committee meetings.
 - Reports from Board or Committee meetings.
 - Items which require their input.
- Have regular discussions by an agreed mechanism
- Have relevant issues pursued in partnership with the Linkage Group Facilitator/Chairperson and Linkage Group Representatives.
- Have Linkage Group discussions facilitated in an open inclusive way, and the views of all members accommodated.

6.3.7 Role of Linkage Group Facilitator/Chairperson

During a meeting of the Linkage Group, the Facilitator ensures that:

- The agenda for each meeting is followed.
- Focus is maintained on the relevant agenda item.
- Time boundaries are assigned to each agenda item.
- Business is progressed in an efficient manner.

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- They follow up between meetings on progressing the work of the Linkage Group.

The wider role of the Facilitator/Chairperson of the Linkage Group is to:

- Guide the work of the Linkage Group.
- Be the point of contact for the PPN for that Linkage Group.
- Plan the work of the Linkage Group to achieve its objectives.
- Be responsible for the functioning of their particular Linkage Group.
- Assist the Linkage Group members to understand their common goal.
- Provide leadership without taking over and remain neutral in all discussions.
- Encourage members of the group to take on tasks and get involved in progressing issues.
- Support elected PPN Representatives who have been elected to represent the PPN on policy committees.

In the event of the Facilitator not being in attendance at a Linkage Group meeting, the meeting shall appoint a Facilitator either by a show of hands or ballot.

7. PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

All Community and Voluntary Sector Representatives on Decision and Policy Making Bodies of external agencies must come through the PPN Electoral Process.

As per guidelines from the Department of Rural and Community Development, the PPN is the “go to body for all Bodies who wish to benefit from the Community and Voluntary Sector experience and expertise”. The PPN shall actively seek compliance on this with relevant agencies and bodies.

A PPN Representative is any member of the PPN elected on behalf of the PPN, including but not limited to: the Secretariat, a Representative to an external Committee, a Linkage Group Facilitator and any other PPN Representative role.

7.1 Principles Governing PPN Representation

- All PPN representatives on Boards or Committees of Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for Westmeath County Council shall report to and take direction from the Secretariat or Plenary.
- Representatives shall not represent their own interests or views or those of their own organisation. Where a Representative fails or omits to comply with this requirement that representative shall automatically and immediately be self-disqualifying themselves and

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shall be immediately removed and notice served on Body or Committee of the details of the Replacement Representative.

- Representation should be spread widely in terms of gender, geography, and type of organisation.
- A member shall ideally only represent the PPN on two (2) Boards or Committees not including the Secretariat.
- A representative is elected for a fixed term up to 5 years to represent the issues of PPN members on a Board or Committee. (depending on standing orders of the Committee)

7.2 Role of the PPN Representative

- Attend and participate fully in meetings of the Linkage Group and Board or Committee, including any subgroups to which they may be appointed.
- Bring forward the issues of the Linkage Group to the Board or Committee for their consideration, including placing items on the Agenda.
- Work collaboratively with the Linkage Group to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc.
- Communicate regularly (at least as frequently as meetings are held) with the Linkage Group 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.
- Network and work strategically with other Board or Committee members for the benefit of the Linkage Group and of PPN, including being able to compromise while retaining the core objective.
- Attend and participate fully in the Plenary, Westmeath PPN Representatives Network and Representative Training.

7.3 Responsibilities of the PPN Representative

- Assist in the organisation of and preparation of Linkage Group Meetings and effective two-way communications with Linkage Group members (with the support of the resource worker).

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- Be able to use basic electronic communications effectively (i.e. email and internet browsing). – Training will be provided.
- Prepare adequately for, attend and participate actively in Linkage Group and Board or Committee.
- Participate in meetings solely on behalf of PPN, leaving any personal, business or political interests outside.
- Work openly and collaboratively with all Linkage Group members to identify issues, research, policy proposals etc., respecting the diversity of views expressed.
- Put forward opinions / views of Linkage Group to The Board or Committee and feedback clearly using plain English 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.

7.4 Rights of the PPN Representative

- Have active engagement from the Secretariat, Linkage Group and Plenary, 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.
- Have at least some PPN meetings held at a time and location which facilitates them.
- Receive an induction pack for the Board or Committee on taking up appointment to include:

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- Terms of reference/constitution.
 - Standing orders /procedures.
 - Meeting schedules, locations and times.
 - Contact details for all Board or Committee members – subject to GDPR
 - Access to technical support where required.
- Receive adequate notice of meetings (dates and venues) and associated documentation (agenda and documents/reports to be read) in advance-as permitted by the relevant standing orders of the committee / board.
 - Have meetings conducted in a way that facilitates participation, open discussion and transparent decision making.

7.5 Vacancies

Representatives are elected to the Joint Policing Committee (JPC), Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), among others – on a fixed term basis – in the event of vacancies arising. See Appendix 2 (page 36) for rights and responsibilities of a Board or Committee with PPN Representation.

In the event of a PPN vacancy occurring, an election shall be called by the Secretariat if no panel to fill vacancies exists.

7.5.1 Nominations

There shall be a call for nominations with eligibility criteria (as determined by the body requesting the representation) for PPN Members to put forward a candidate at least twenty-one (21) days prior to the elections.

The closing date for nomination shall be not less than seven (7) days prior to the date of the election. The nominating group must complete a nomination form which may include a short biography of the candidate.

7.5.2 Election

Should there be an equal number of nominations for-the positions available, then a vote shall not be necessary, and the candidates so nominated shall be declared elected.

Should the number of persons nominated exceed the number of vacancies/positions then an election shall take place.

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Should an election take place, it shall take place in accordance with the election process in Appendix 3 (page 38).

For PPN vacancies on committees / bodies election shall take place at the AGM Plenary.

For PPN vacancies on committees/bodies which have not had PPN Representation previously, the Secretariat shall determine the most appropriate Pillar/Plenary to nominate that representation responsibility to.

For vacancies occurring on the Local Community Development Committee and the Secretariat elections shall take place at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary.

The Secretariat shall decide (where a panel does not exist) to hold a postal vote or online vote to fill positions arising between Plenaries.

7.5.3 Panels

Where an election takes place, candidates who do not attain a high enough number of votes to attain a seat are placed on a panel.

Any Vacancy so arising on a board or committee between the normal Annual Electoral Process shall be filled by the next highest candidate willing to serve that particular vacancy.

7.6 Removal of Representatives

If a representative on any of the committees or boards fails or otherwise omits to:

- Undertake his/her role, as laid down by this Constitution, in an appropriate manner.
- Attend the relevant meetings without reasonable cause.
- Report back to the Membership/Linkage Group without reasonable cause.
- Represent the relevant Linkage Group member groups appropriately.
- Comply with any written instruction.

and where a Representative represents their own interests or views or those of their own organisation, that representative shall automatically and immediately be self-disqualifying themselves by his/her actions and shall be immediately removed and notice served on Body or Committee of the details of the Replacement Representative.

7.6.1 Removal Appeals Process

The representative in question may appeal the disqualification within seven (7) days beginning on the day on which notification of the disqualification is received to the Secretariat and may request a personal hearing.

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The 3-member General Purposes Subcommittee shall convene within seven (7) working days beginning on the day on receipt of the appeal to consider the Appeal and to decide on the matter.

The General Purposes Sub-Committee shall process the appeal as efficiently and effectively as is possible to come to a decision within a reasonable period of time.

The Representative if not satisfied with the 'Sub-Committees' decision may appeal to the remaining 5 members of the Secretariat, plus one independent person excluding those members who heard the appeal. (Note that the sub-committee will not have interacted with or forwarded any recommendation from the remaining 5 members of the Secretariat or independent person). Thus, ensuring a clean 2 step process.

The Secretariat shall process the appeal as efficiently and effectively as is possible to come to a decision within a reasonable period of time.

The Decision of the Secretariat be final.

7.7 Complaints Procedure

All complaints shall be in writing addressed to the PPN Resource Worker in the first instance who shall immediately acknowledge the complaint and shall advise the Secretariat of receipt of the complaint; the Resource Worker shall then refer the matter to The General Purposes Sub-committee.

Any complaint shall set out clearly in a rational, logical and coherent manner the substance of the grievance and shall identify what process(s) and or procedure(s) are the subject of the complaint.

All complaints shall be signed both in original hand signature and block capitals by the person(s) making the complaint.

The General Purposes Sub-committee shall convene within seven (7) working days beginning on the day of receipt of the complaint to consider the matter.

The General Purposes Sub-Committee shall process the complaint as efficiently and effectively as is possible to come to a decision within a reasonable period of time.

Once a decision has been made the complainant will be notified of the decision within 10 working days.

7.7.1 Complaints Appeals Process

Where the person(s) who made the complaint is or are not satisfied with the decision of the General Purposes Sub-Committee may appeal within ten (10) working days to the to the remaining 5 members of the Secretariat, plus one independent person excluding those members who heard the appeal. (Note that the sub-committee will not have interacted with or forwarded any recommendation from the remaining 5 members of the Secretariat or independent person). Thus, ensuring a clean 2 step process.

The Secretariat shall process the appeal as efficiently and effectively as is possible to come to a decision within a reasonable period of time.

The Decision of the Secretariat be final.

7.8 Code of Conduct for PPN Representatives

Members and Member Representatives of the PPN shall always conduct themselves in a professional manner and in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and the Code of Conduct adopted thereunder. See Appendix 4 for Code of Conduct (page 39).

The Code of Conduct shall be signed by every Member of the PPN elected to a representative position on the various committees/Boards where the PPN has such representation and by the members of the Secretariat and by every member who acts as a Facilitator.

7.8.1 Amendments to the Code of Conduct

A proposal to amend the Code of Conduct may be made:

- A. By the Secretariat.
- B. By not less than 30 members in good standing within 10 days of the date the Plenary AGM.

The proposal shall be circulated to the membership and placed on the Agenda for the next Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Plenary convened for that purpose.

The amendment shall be effective forthwith if passed by simple majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary or Extraordinary General Meeting.

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS

8.1 Financial Records

Financial Records shall be in accordance with acceptable practices, in accordance with directions of funders or in compliance with accounting standards and processes.

A copy of the Financial Statement approved by Secretariat shall be circulated to all members prior to AGM.

8.2 PPN Representative Expenses

Expenses of PPN Representatives in the carrying out of their duties are covered as laid out in the PPN Expenses policy. See Appendix 5 (page 43).

9. SERVICE OF NOTICES

A notice may be given to any member /group/organisation either through handing it to the member/named representative of group/organisation or by personal delivery or sending it by electronic means to the registered address or email address of that member as per the records of the PPN.

The Failure of any Member to receive notice of meeting shall not invalidate the proceedings at or of the meeting.

10. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

A proposal to amend the Constitution may be made:

A. By the Secretariat.

B. By not less than 30 members in good standing within 10 days of the date the Plenary AGM.

The proposal shall be circulated to the membership and placed on the Agenda for the next Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Plenary convened for that purpose.

The amendment shall be effective forthwith if passed by simple majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.

This Constitution was adapted at a Westmeath Public Participation Network Annual General Meeting of Plenary held on.....

Signed on behalf of Westmeath Public Participation Network:

_____.

Facilitator

Date:

Appendix 1: Westmeath Public Participation Network Plenary

Standing Orders

The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure the orderly and effective conduct of Plenary meetings of the Westmeath Public Participation Network.

1. Frequency of Meetings

The Plenary shall meet twice a year or as requested in accordance with the Constitution.

2. Voting Rights and Decisions

2.1 Only matters on the Agenda shall be the business of the meeting in accordance with the constitution.

2.2 All decisions taken shall be in accordance with procedures set out in constitution.

2.3 Each named Westmeath PPN Member Organisation shall have one vote.

2.4 Voting shall be by show of hands or secret ballot and in accordance with constitution.

2.5 Decisions shall be by simple majority.

2.6 Voting for election to all positions shall be by secret ballot.

3. Attendance at Plenaries

3.1 All full membership Westmeath PPN Organisations/groups are entitled to attend the Plenary.

3.2 Westmeath PPN member organisations can send more than one Representative to the Plenary. Only one of those Representatives shall have voting rights on behalf of the group i.e. Group vote. Other representatives shall have speaking rights only.

3.3 The Secretariat may invite guest speakers to attend the Plenary.

3.4 The Secretariat may invite strategic partner organisations to attend the Plenary in an observer capacity.

4. Agenda

4.1 The Agenda shall be prepared by the Secretariat. The order of business shall be:

1. Welcome address by Facilitator
2. Housekeeping Duties, Health and Safety

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3. Adopting Plenary Standing Orders
4. Approval of minutes of last Plenary and matters arising
5. PPN Activity Report by Secretariat Member
6. Finance/Budget Update
7. Ratification of Linkage Group elections.
8. Election to fill any vacancies arising.
9. Items and Motions submitted in advance for discussion and decision.
10. Workshop / Information Session / Guest Speaker as requested by previous Plenary and / or as organised by the Secretariat.
11. Date of Next Meeting

4.2 Items that member organisations want included on the Agenda shall be presented to the Secretariat at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting. Similar items shall be taken as a composite item or motion as agreed by Secretariat.

4.3 The Plenary meeting shall be facilitated by a member/s of the Secretariat or as set out in the constitution.

5. Minutes of the Plenary

5.1 The minutes of the Plenary shall be taken by a member of the Secretariat or Westmeath PPN Staff.

5.2 The minutes shall include a record of those attending, actions arising, and decisions made.

6. Conduct at Plenary Meetings

6.1 Members always shall observe accepted practice while taking part in the Plenary business, including:

- Be courteous and speak by addressing the Facilitator;
- Only address the meeting in order and as directed by Facilitator;
- Always Comply immediately with directions of Facilitator;
- No cross talk or interruption of any speaker addressing the meeting;

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- Follow the Agenda and strive to reach effective decisions;
- Represent the views of your member organisation;
- Turn off your mobile phones as you enter the room of debate (where you have an emergency call please leave the room);
- Be prepared for the Plenary by reading relevant documents etc. received before the meeting;
- Business shall be conducted by the Facilitator of the Plenary in keeping with Standing Orders.

6.2 Discrimination

All members attending the Plenary have the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, gender, age, sexuality, religion or any other matter which causes people to be treated with injustice.

Appendix 2: Rights and Responsibilities of a Board/Committee with PPN Representation

The way in which the Committee conducts its business has a huge impact on the effectiveness of PPN representation. An overformal and rigid process can make participation difficult. An open facilitative style can make it easy for all members to participate and contribute. The following rights and responsibilities are generally within the remit of the Chair or Chief Officer (or equivalent). The majority are likely to be already in place.

While the PPN advocates for the following, it acknowledges that it has limited control in its implementation.

Responsibilities of the Board or Committee are to:

- Have and communicate clear terms of reference and procedures / standing orders and a vision for the Board or Committee.
- Hold regular meetings at times, dates and locations that facilitate the participation of volunteers. Ideally these dates should be set annually.
- Hold an induction meeting and have an induction pack for new members to explain the processes and procedures of the Board or Committee.
- Give one month's notice of meetings and to circulate the agenda and any documentation for reading at absolute minimum one week in advance. This is to facilitate PPN members to consult with their linkage group before the meeting and to ensure that members have adequate information with which to make comments and decisions.
- Chair the meeting in an open and transparent way as to enable and value the contribution of all members and fosters a culture of active listening. This should include giving enough time for discussion and deliberation of items, and if required setting up subgroups to bring recommendations to the main Board or Committee. Decisions should be made in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure that any conflicts of interest are clearly stated and dealt with appropriately.
- Offer relevant training to all members and to provide support to members in interpreting technical documents.
- Review the workings of the Board or Committee on a regular basis and to take on board any recommendations.
- **Where possible:**
 - Set the agenda in consultation with members and to enable members to put items on the agenda.

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- Pay travel and other expenses to members.
- Include all points of discussion within the minutes, and not to dismiss those which may be considered “only relevant to a few”.
- To produce an agreed “meeting outcome” document at the end of each meeting which can be shared with the Linkage Group.

Rights of the Board or Committee

PPN Representatives shall:

- Attend meetings, or send their alternate (where possible);
- Prepare thoroughly for meetings, and be able to contribute fully;
- Feed back to their PPN Linkage Groups and take direction from them;
- Take a full part in the workings of the Board or Committee including participation in subgroups, consultations, etc.;
- Be open and honest in their dealings with the Board or Committee, declaring any conflicts of interest.

Appendix 3: Electoral Process

The process of Election.

- All Elections shall be by secret ballot.
- Each Group / Organisation shall be entitling to one (1) vote and an individual shall only vote on behalf of the group.
- The Candidates receiving the highest number of votes are elected.
- In the event of a “tie” then a draw by “lot” (*Note: Where the process by deciding by “lot” (Lottery) occurs, those responsible must first decide which Candidate shall be declared elected following such process. Is it the Candidate first drawn out of the “hat” (traditional expression) or the Candidate remaining in the “hat”?*).
- Records of each Election must be maintained including details of each Count.
- Verification of Nominees to ensure they meet the criteria.
- Circulation of details of Nominees to Linkage Groups to consider them prior to the Election.

Appendix 4: Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct shall be signed by every Member of the PPN elected to a representative position on the various committees/Boards where the PPN has such representation and by the members of the Secretariat and by every member who acts as a Facilitator.

This Code of Conduct details what each Member shall commit to in their role as a Member/ Representative of the PPN and in all areas relating to their interaction with, and on behalf of, the PPN.

All Members and Members with a Representative role have a duty of care and responsibility to act in the best interests of the PPN complying with this Code of Conduct and the provisions of the Constitution.

1. Organisational Values

All Members commit to and promise to comply with the fundamental values that underpin all the activities of PPN.

2. Accountability

As a member everything you do and every interaction you are involved in shall be able to stand the test of scrutiny by members of the public, the media, members, beneficiaries, stakeholders and the regulatory authorities.

3. Integrity and Honesty

These shall be the hallmarks of all conduct within and on behalf of the PPN particularly when dealing with fellow members and colleagues and external individuals and agencies.

4. Transparency

Members shall promote an atmosphere of openness throughout the PPN in order to promote confidence to members of the public, Local Authority Elected Members and staff, beneficiaries and regulators and to promote strategic and operational effectiveness.

5. Governance

Members shall always support the ethos values of PPN and ensure compliance with good Governance and shall: -

- Commit to supporting and advocating compliance with good Governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector and the myriad of groups and organisations within the sector;
- Participate in appropriate induction, training and development programmes;

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- Support the Resource Worker in their role and the Secretariat in their role.

6. Conflicts of Interest

Members shall always:

- Act in the best interests of the PPN;
- Declare any ‘Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Loyalty’ or any such circumstance as may be viewed by others as conflicting as soon as it arises;
- Submit to the judgment of the Secretariat and comply with any requirements it requires regarding potential conflicts of interest/loyalty.

7. Guardian of the PPN’S reputation

Members shall:

- Not speak as a member to the media or any public forum without the prior knowledge and approval of the Secretariat.
- Ensure that any comments made shall reflect current policy even if they do not agree with them.
- When speaking as a private citizen upholds the reputation of the PPN.
- Respect individual confidentiality.
- Take an active interest in the PPN’S public image.

8. Personal Gain

Members shall:

- Not personally gain from their role as a member nor permit others to do so as a result of actions or negligence.
- Document expenses and seek reimbursement according to agreed procedure.
- Not accept gifts or hospitality without the consent of the Secretariat.
- Use PPN resources responsibly, when authorised in accordance with procedure.

9. In addition to the foregoing Members shall:

- Not break the law or act against any regulation in force;
- Support the PPN’S vision, values, principles and aims and actively promote these;
- Always comply with PPN’S policy and procedure;
- Seek to maintain and promote integrity, good governance, effectiveness and efficiency for the delivery of the aims of PPN.

10. Plenary and other Meetings of PPN Members

Members attending Plenary and other meetings internal to or external to the PPN shall at all times conduct and behave in a professional manner keeping in mind at all times their conduct reflects on the integrity of the PPN and the sector and shall observe accepted practice while participating as a representative or member and shall:

- Be courteous and speak by addressing the Facilitator/Chairperson;
- Only address the meeting in order and as directed by Facilitator/Chairperson;
- Comply immediately with directions of Facilitator/Chairperson;
- Not cross talk or interruption of any speaker addressing the meeting;
- Follow the Agenda and strive to reach effective decisions;
- Represent the views of your member organisation;
- Turn off your mobile phones as you enter the room of debate (where you have an emergency call please leave the room);
- Be prepared for all meetings by reading relevant documents etc. received before the meeting.

11. Secretariat

Members of the Secretariat shall:

- Embody the principles of good governance and proper procedure in all actions and live up to the trust placed on them by their election to the Secretariat.
- Comply and abide by the PPN governance procedures and practice.
- Commit to attend all Secretariat Meetings, and in the event of unavoidable inability to attend, shall comply with provisions of the Constitution.
- Strive to be familiar with all agenda items received by them and be prepared to contribute to discussion and decision making at meetings.
- Respect the authority of the Facilitator.
- Maintain a respectful attitude to the opinions of others.
- Understand that decisions will ideally be made by consensus but may be by vote and shall consider any majority vote as a corporate decision and will accept and support it.
- Maintain confidentiality unless authorised to speak on matters outside Secretariat meetings.

12. Leaving the Secretariat or Representative Role

Members shall:

- Understand that any breach of this code may result in my removal from the PPN or any of its constituent levels – Linkage Groups, Secretariat or any representative role.

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- Inform the Facilitator of the Secretariat in writing, stating reasons for resigning from the Secretariat or representative role.
- Participate in an exit interview if requested.

13. This Code of Conduct was adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the PPN held on: _____.

14. Signed on behalf of Westmeath Public Participation Network:

Date: _____

Facilitator

15. Signed by Representative / Secretariat Member / Facilitator/Chairperson:

Date: _____

16. Name of Committee / Board: _____

Appendix 5: Westmeath PPN Travel and Subsistence Policy

SECTION 1: WHO CAN CLAIM EXPENSES WESTMEATH PPN

Representatives who have been elected to sit on committees (Secretariat, SPCs, LCDC, JPC, MRDATF etc) can claim expenses, providing their participation is not part of their professional work and they cannot claim expenses for their participation from the Local Authority, their employer or from any other source.

SECTION 2: WHAT EXPENSES CAN BE CLAIMED

- a) Travel by private vehicle or public transport to meetings of the committee that the Westmeath PPN Representative has been elected to attend.
- b) Parking costs for these meetings.
- c) PPN representatives' travel and parking costs to other meetings subject to prior approval of the Westmeath PPN Secretariat or Resource Worker.
- d) PPN Reps that attend other PPN organised events or meetings not specifically organised for their attendance, cannot claim expenses for that meeting e.g. Plenary.
- e) Associated costs (i.e. meals for day long events where refreshments are not provided) may only be claimed with pre-approval from the Westmeath PPN Secretariat or Resource Worker.
- f) Overnight costs will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where absolutely necessary and with prior approval of the Secretariat.

SECTION 3: MILEAGE RATES

- a) If mileage cannot be claimed from elsewhere, for those using a private motor vehicle Westmeath PPN will pay a flat mileage fee of .4815 cent per kilometre.

SECTION 4: WHEN TO CLAIM EXPENSES

- a) Expenses must be claimed on a bi-monthly basis (but always in the same year). Expenses claimed in December must be claimed by the 3rd week in December of the same year. This is due to PPN expenditure and financial reporting requirements from the Department of Rural & Community Development.

SECTION 5: HOW TO SUBMIT A CLAIM

- a) Mileage claims are a full and comprehensive payment to cover fuel, depreciation, wear and tear, insurance etc as a full and final payment to cover all claims against Westmeath PPN.
- b) It is the responsibility of each claimant that they have sufficient insurance cover in place to indemnifying Westmeath PPN and its host organisation Westmeath County Council.
- c) Complete an expenses claim form, preferably electronically or a hard copy if preferred. The PPN Resource Worker can assist with this.
- d) The start and end point of each journey must be stated and the purpose of travel. This information is necessary for all modes of travel.
- e) Receipts, for example parking, public transport tickets etc must be submitted.
- f) Return the form to the Westmeath PPN Resource Worker for authorisation and processing.

SECTION 6: HOW EXPENSES ARE REIMBURSED

- a) Payments are made by Westmeath PPN's host organisation Westmeath County Council.
- b) Expenses will be reimbursed by bank transfer.
- c) IBAN and BIC information will be required for bank transfer.

SECTION 7: REVIEW

- a) This Expenses policy will be reviewed in January 2021