



LAOIS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

A Guide to being a PPN Representative on a Board/Committee

Laois Heritage Forum

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Introduction

Welcome to Laois Public Participation Network!

The PPN gives us a voice!!

The aim of a PPN Structure is to facilitate and enable public organisations operating within the wider community to give voice to a diverse range of views, issues and interests within the local government system.

The PPN will:

- **Facilitate the participation** by the public and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and community/voluntary sectors on decision making bodies.
- **Strengthen the capacity** of the environmental, social inclusion and community/voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community that they live/participate in.

Provide information to the environmental, social inclusion and community/voluntary sectors and will act as a hub around which information can be received and distributed.

As a Representative of Laois Public Participation Network (PPN), you will be part of the democratic framework which gives our local communities and its groups a voice within the decision making processes within local government.

This document will outline for you the committee on which you will represent Laois PPN, including its scope and membership. It will also outline your role as a PPN representative, and the importance of having the collective voice of the community heard through you on that committee.

Be reassured that you are supported at all times in your role as a PPN representative. If you need to, know that you can ask the silly question, and that you can talk to someone who has the information you need, e.g., your fellow representatives, a member of the Secretariat, or your PPN Resource Worker.

Don't ever feel foolish at being confused by it all! The PPN Framework is a learning adventure in which we are all taking part, and together we will make it stronger by our best efforts and learning from our mistakes! It is your commitment to the PPN that will ensure its strength positive outcomes.

Best of luck in your endeavours!

Laois Heritage Forum

Role of the Committee

It is the task of the Strategy Policy Committees (SPC's) as committees of the Council, to **advise and assist** the Council in its work. While it is the task of each SPC to assist the Council in the **formation and development of policy**, the final policy decisions will rest ultimately with the full Council. The SPC system is intended to give Councillors and relevant sectoral and community interests, an opportunity for **full involvement in the policy making process** from the early stages, when policy options are more fluid. Therefore, much of the preliminary and background work, discussion and recommendation are completed by the SPC for final consideration and ratification by the Council.

The SPC has a major role in assisting and advising the Council in relation to functions of a **strategic nature**, e.g. preparation of a Development Plan, Local Area Plans, etc. They also have a function in other non-statutory policy areas such as

- Urban & Village Renewal Plans;
- Policy for developing work programmes and prioritising particular services;
- Consideration of the needs of people with disabilities in policy making and
- Being mindful of sustainability principles in provision of services by the local authority.

The Chief Executive (or a delegated local authority staff member) is required to advise and assist the SPC generally and administers to the SPC Meetings.

The SPC for Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning covers the local authority areas of:

- Economic Development
- Employment Creation and Maintenance
- Enterprise Supports and oversight of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
- Planning and Development Services
- Sustainable Development
- Conservation Issues
- Urban and Village Renewal
- Preparation of the Economic element of the new Local Economic & Community Plan

Each Committee will have its own set of standing orders which you will receive from the Committee Administrator. This will also set out how often the Committee meets and the time and venue of the meetings.

In the case of a Strategic Policy Committee, generally:

1. Meetings take place every quarter, notice of at least one week is usually given
2. Venue is County Hall, Portlaoise (unless otherwise agreed)
3. Meetings are held during business hours
4. Meetings are chaired by an elected member; the Chair may rotate to another elected member halfway through the 5-year term of the Council.
5. Agendas, minutes and any relevant documentation are issued by the Committee Administrator, in your case, Ms. Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer.

Terms to be Aware of:

SPC – Strategic Policy Committee

LAP – Local Area Plan

LEO – Local Enterprise Office

CPG – Corporate Policy Group

(Chairs of each SPC and the Chairperson of the Council make up this committee, set the agenda for each Council Meeting and approve finally any policies/plans to be brought before the full Council)

LCDC – Local Community Development Committee

JPC – Joint Policing Committee

Your Role as a PPN Representative

Listen!

It is important to go into such committee meetings with a willingness to listen to (a) the business being discussed and (b) the points being made by all parties at the table. It is especially important to do this at your first few meetings, acknowledging that it will take a while for you to get to know the business of the SPC and the contributions being made by the other members. Listening will provide you with a balanced insight into what's important and what isn't important, when feeding back to the Secretariat and/or the Plenary of groups.

Discuss!

Don't be afraid to enter discussions. Having listened to everyone's opinion, give yours. You have been selected to be a member of this committee because of your interest in the subject matter and because you are a member of the community in which we all live and are affected by policies or plans being made, so be assured that you can participate fully and knowledgeably in the debate.

Represent!

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

Feed back!

It is your responsibility to feed back to your peers within the PPN Framework. Feedback is a two-way street, i.e., (a) issues to be raised by you at your particular committee and (b) feedback from the business of the meeting to your pillar group or linkage group, whichever is appropriate.

The PPN Secretariat will assist and advise with the process of providing feedback to the PPN by putting a process in place in due course. In the meantime, allow yourself the time to get acquainted with your new position and its processes, and most importantly, keep in touch with members of the Secretariat in relation to any matters raised at your committee.