



Laois Public Participation Network

Minutes of Meeting of PPN Secretariat

Tuesday, 27th July 2021, 7.00pm

Treo Nua, Portlaoise

Present: Mr. Paddy Buggy - Chair
Mr. Vincent Booth
Mr. Michael J. Cobbe
Mr. John Oxley
Mr. Donal O' Shea

Apologies: Ms. Ann Fleming
Mr. Bolaji Adeyanju

In Attendance: Mr. Dan Bergin, PPN Resource Worker.
Ms. Ailish Keane, PPN Support Worker.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June were proposed by Michael Cobbe, seconded by Paddy Buggy, confirmed and signed.

MRPPN Meeting

The most recent meeting of the Midlands Region Public Participation Network (**MRPPN**) was hosted by Kildare PPN and took place online. Laois PPN were represented by Laois Secretariat Member Paddy Buggy and Laois PPN Resource Worker Dan Bergin.

“**PPN Events**” was the topic of Laois PPN and Paddy Buggy, Laois PPN Secretariat Member gave the presentation on our behalf. The presentation showed how our events helped to promote Laois PPN and increase our membership. The variety and volume of Laois PPN events was praised by the other PPN's. The other PPNs said they would use our ideas for all three of their own pillars. It was also noted that Laois PPN were the only county to have a Power Point presentation at the meeting.

The other topics discussed on the night were:

Transparency (Department Directive) – Westmeath PPN

Structural Review – Offlay PPN

MRPPN Format – Kildare PPN

The next meeting of the Midlands Region PPN is scheduled for Wednesday 27th October 2021 and is due to be hosted by Westmeath PPN.

Community & Voluntary Awards 2021

At the last meeting of the Secretariat, it was proposed and agreed that Laois Volunteer Centre become the third partner for the annual Community and Voluntary Awards. The Secretariat felt the Laois Volunteer Centre were an ideal fit for this particular event. It was also agreed that the 'Unsung Hero' Award remain a non-monetary prize. It was suggested a trip away or a Laois Gift Card could be part of the prize. Carmel McNicholl and Laois County Council are in favour of this also.

Laois Connects 2021

This year Laois Connects is moving from a one-week event to a month-long event. Last year, there were 46 events over 7 days happening in Laois and competition between the stakeholders was very high. This year, there will be themed weeks, one week aimed at women, one week aimed at men and one week aimed at children.

Laois PPN are holding two events for Laois Connects 2021. An online event "An Introduction to Self Harm" will be facilitated by the HSE. It's an online programme delivered by the HSE which has proved very popular with Teachers, Youth Workers, SNA's, community groups. The second event to promote good mental health will be an in-person event. Guest speaker on the night will be Rory O'Connor of Rory's Stories. Rory is a comedian, author and a major mental health advocate. Rory has around 1.1 million followers on social media. Castle Durrow has been provisionally booked as the venue with maximum capacity of 50 attendees. The deadline for events to feature in the Laois Connects Brochure is the end of August with the finalised brochure being circulated in early October.

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) Seats

Laois PPN have five seats on the LCDC. Three of the Laois PPN Representatives have completed their term on this committee. We would like to thank the outgoing representatives of Robbie Quinn, P.J. Campbell and Mary White for their dedication and commitment to the position.

The incoming Laois PPN representatives are:

Joan Bolger – Portlaoise Family Resource Centre – **Social Inclusion Representative**

Nina Horan – Yarn Bombing Mountmellick – **Community & Voluntary Representative**

John Oxley – Raheen Community Alert – **Community & Voluntary Representative**

We wish our new representatives the very best of luck in their new role.

Vincent Booth, Laois PPN Secretariat Member through the chair extended his best wishes to Naeem Iqbal who was nominated as a Laois PPN Representative to the LCDC earlier this year as a social inclusion representative.

PPN Structural Review Update

The Department of Rural and Community Development are conducting a structural review of the PPN. Mazars Consultants are carrying out this independent review on behalf of the

Department. The Department sought two representatives from each PPN to take part in a workshop. Sheila Coyle and Paddy Buggy have taken part in a workshop on behalf of Laois PPN. They were shocked at the negativity that exists in PPNs. Laois PPN are very lucky to have a great working relationship with Cllrs, Laois County Council Senior Management and Laois County Council staff and work well in collaboration with other organisations. Unfortunately this does not exist in some other PPN's. The independence of Laois PPN is respected in particular by John Mulholland, Chief Executive and Donal Brennan, Director of Services. Unfortunately the independence of some PPN's is not respected in other Counties. Laois PPN have 28 representatives on committees and steering groups and the experience of the reps is positive.

The Department are encouraging PPNs to complete their written submissions and submit it via the portal before the deadline Friday 20th August with only one submission per PPN.

Donal O' Shea, Laois PPN Secretariat Member had the following to say with regard to the PPN Structural Review:

“The following are areas which I would like to see included for the structural review of the PPNs.

Shortcomings here are impeding representation and progress in the area of social inclusion in particular.

I don't accept an assertion which some colleagues have that it isn't possible to facilitate diversity in an inclusive manner either by the PPNs or the SPCs. Clearly there is an amount of nuanced training required to facilitate this process though.

Reps will need a degree of uniformity in training to develop the inclusive and diverse society which is so readily advocated for at an EU level. A member of our secretariat has had extensive engagements with via various committees in the EU on this. **The Chairs of the SPCs are likely to need additional training**, to ensure that the appropriate diverse range of interests are catered for in decision making and sign off on policy matters.

This structural review is so critical in influencing policy that it cannot I believe be solely focused on PPNs, SPCs and Reps. If it does, Ireland will continue to be adversely impacted in the formation and the delivery of effective and transformative policy for many years to come!

I would therefore ask that the following areas receive careful consideration for inclusion and representation for the structural review of social policy in all of its forms.

1. **The work being undertaken around the LECPs**
2. **External facilitation**
3. **Indicators of best practice**
4. **Representation Issues**
5. **Mental well being ”**

The Written Submission Structural Review is to be prepared By Dan Bergin, Resource Worker and circulated to the Secretariat for approval prior to submission.

A.O.B.

- **Residents Association** – Vincent Booth through the chair updated the meeting that Laois County Council along with Portlaoise Tidy Towns are helping out residents associations with grass cutting and keeping areas clean and tidy.
- **Drinking Water Fountains** – John Oxley through the chair asked if drinking water fountains at Laois Tourist spots might be a project that Laois PPN could get behind having seen this done at other tourist attractions around the country. The Secretariat will consider this at a future meeting.

The next secretariat meeting will take place in September.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:



Chairperson

Date:

21 / 09 / 21