

Meath Public Participation Network
Electoral Policy for filling vacancies on Local
Authority Structures in County Meath and on
Meath PPN Secretariat

Approved at meeting of Meath PPN Plenary held on



**Public Participation
Network Meath**

INTRODUCTION

Meath PPN was established under The Local Government Act 2014. The main role of PPNs is to facilitate participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner on local authority decision making bodies which include Strategic Policy Committees and Local Community Development Committees. The method through which the Meath PPN elects community Representatives is via the Linkage Groups and, if these do not exist, through email calls where registered PPN groups may put forward and elect Representatives to the various bodies upon which Meath PPN holds representation on behalf of the community groups of County Meath. In the absence of Linkage Groups, the section of the Plenary relevant to the position will be requested to engage and ballot on their chosen candidate where necessary e.g. requested Environment place on relevant Strategic Policy Committees will trigger calls for Expressions of Interest from the Environment groups. In addition to filling vacancies on bodies such as SPCs this Electoral Policy also covers filling vacancies on the PPN Secretariat.

REPRESENTATIVE ROLES FOR MEATH PPN

To fulfil its representative role Meath PPN supports a number of nominations and elections to various bodies in order to enable and empower community representation and civic participation:

- Meath Local Community Development Committee
- Meath Joint Policing Committee
- Housing, Community and Cultural Development Strategic Policy Committee
- Climate, Action, Environment and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee
- Transportation and Planning Strategic Policy Committee
- Economic Development, Enterprise and European Affairs Strategic Policy Committee

The above representational responsibilities of Meath PPN do not represent the maximum potential of the participative democratic reach of this PPN. Meath PPN will strive to increase the bodies on which it is represented and, by extension, the representation of PPN member groups and the public they represent. In other counties, for example, PPNs have also been allocated places on bodies such as Local Sports Partnerships, County Childcare Committees, Local Development Companies and Rural Transport Companies.

TERM AND ROTATION

Each Representative shall serve a three-year term (unless bound by the organisations own rules e.g. SPCs or LCDC may differ from this) and are eligible for re-nomination and re-appointment. However, Representatives shall serve no more than 2 consecutive 3 year terms (or as laid out by the representative body they sit upon). Representation should be from PPN organisations, and Representatives should have a clear mandate from their nominating organisations.

GENDER EQUALITY AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Meath PPN aspires to have a minimum of 30% males and 30% females elected within its own structures (such as the PPN Secretariat) and with regard to PPN Representatives elected on to external bodies. This will assist in achieving a balanced gender representation on these structures and bodies.

Meath PPN also aims to increase the number of young people involved in structures such as the PPN Secretariat and bodies such as Strategic Policy Committees. There is a clear need to encourage young people to become more involved in community based groups and in the work and activities of PPNs across Ireland. Meath PPN will do all that it can (e.g. through courses, workshops, mentoring etc) to encourage greater participation of young people in community activities.

CONDUCT AND TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS

(i) Pre-election

PPN member groups will be informed of the vacancy by email, or by post if they do not have a contact email address. This information will include:

1. The name of the Board or Committee within which the vacancy has arisen
2. Whether the vacant position is for a nominee/Representative from a particular Pillar (i.e. Community/Voluntary, Social Inclusion or Environmental)
3. The length of the term of office.
4. The remit of the Board or Committee.
5. The knowledge, skills or capabilities required.
6. The rights, role and responsibilities of PPN Representatives.

7. The time commitments of the role.
8. An invitation to join the relevant Linkage Group, if applicable.
9. A nomination form for the vacancy and the deadline for nominations.
10. Whether the vote will be held at a Linkage Group meeting or online/postal vote

(ii) Nominations Process

- a) The PPN Secretariat will make a call for nominations from the Colleges/Linkage/Thematic Groups/Member Groups, giving at least 10 days' notice before the closing date for nominations.
- b) Nominating organisations must be full registered members of the PPN, whose registration has not lapsed. Member Groups whose membership has lapsed should register within the notification period. It will be a matter for the PPN to decide if that Member Group can nominate.
- c) In situations where a vacancy has to be filled by a person from a particular Pillar, nominations must be made by a PPN Member Group who are in the same Pillar as the vacancy.
- d) The Member Group must complete the Nomination Form. Only fully completed and signed Nomination Forms will be accepted by the PPN.
- e) A Member Group may nominate only one person to any vacancy.
- f) Late nominations will not be accepted.
- g) Nominees must be a member of the group who are nominating them and/or should have some form of connection to the nominating group (e.g. they may participate in activities organised by the group).
- h) The nominee must confirm that they understand the role of the Representative, will follow the Constitution of the PPN and the Representatives Charter and will act at all times to further the objectives of the PPN.
- i) Following the closing date for nominations, all nominations are reviewed and, if everything is in order, accepted by the PPN Secretariat.
 - o If more valid nominations are received than seats available, an election will take place
 - o If the same number of valid nominations as available seats is received, the nominee(s) will be deemed elected.

- o If less valid nominations than seats are received, the PPN may look for an interim Representative from their membership to make sure that the PPN is represented on the Board or Committee concerned.
- j) An individual may only represent the PPN on one Board or Committee (with the exception of Secretariat members, who are permitted to hold positions on both the Secretariat of the PPN and one other Board or Committee following the usual nominations and elections process).
- k) Where an individual has been nominated for, and elected to, more than one seat, they must choose their preferred Board or Committee. The seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.
- l) Where an individual is currently a Representative on a Board or Committee and is then nominated for and elected to another seat, they must choose their preferred Board or Committee.
 - o Where they prefer to continue in their current Representative role, the seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.
 - o Where they want to take up the role on the new Board or Committee, they must resign from their current Representative role. The vacancy on that Board or Committee will then be advertised and filled by the PPN in the usual way.
- m) Only in exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Plenary, and on a temporary or interim basis, would an individual be allowed to sit on more than one Board or Committee.
- n) Representatives are nominated by Member Groups following an open and transparent nominations process. If the original nominating body no longer exists, or the Representative is no longer associated with that nominating body, the Representative will be deemed to have stepped down from the role and an alternate will be selected following another nominations process.
- o) In the event of no nominations being received for a vacancy the Secretariat will ask the relevant PPN interest group (Linkage Group) for recommendations for a candidate to be co-

opted. In the event of no nominations being received the election process will be re-run and a new deadline set for receipt of nominations.

- p) All nominations must be verified by the Secretariat as meeting the required criteria. Candidates must be asked for personal data to be shared.
- q) Secretariat members who are running for election for an additional representative vacancy cannot be involved in the verification of nominations for the same vacancy.

(iii) Restrictions on nominations

- a) Elected representatives of Local Authorities, Dáil Eireann, Seanad Eireann and the European Parliament as well as local area representatives from political parties cannot be nominated through this process.
- b) If anyone nominated through this process subsequently decides to enter electoral politics he/she must immediately resign their PPN representative role.
- c) Any person putting themselves forward as publicly elected representatives shall stand down from their role as PPN Representative from the time they make their declaration to the time of the public election.
- d) A person who has stood for election or been co-opted or who has been an elected representative on any level of government (local, national or MEP) may not be chosen to represent the PPN on any representative role for one year after the date of the election or after completing their term of office.
- e) In keeping with the PPN's policy to encourage inclusion and participation of all member groups, any one PPN member group can only have Representatives on a maximum of three Boards or committees referenced on Page 1 of this document.

(iv) Elections

- a) Elections will be free and accessible to all eligible Member Groups, in so far as is reasonably possible. It may, in some cases, be necessary to restrict elections, for example, to members of a particular College. Where restrictions are necessary, these should be transparent, with a clearly stated reason.
- b) Elections will be by email and online forms.

- c) All election materials will be sent by the PPN to the main contact address provided by each Member Group on registration/re-registration. It is the responsibility of Member Groups to ensure that their contact details are accurate and up to date.
- d) Election materials should include:
 - o An overview explaining what the election is for, who has been nominated (including their Member Group and College membership), and full details on how votes are to be returned and the date for return of votes.
 - o A brief CV of each nominee, relevant to the election in progress (it is not intended that nominees will provide full career CVs).
 - o Where applicable (e.g. when there is more than one candidate) ballot papers will also be provided setting out how the vote should be cast (e.g. X, numerical preference etc.).
 - o At the discretion of the Secretariat, if approved by the Plenary, a list of eligible voting Member Groups per College or Linkage/Thematic Group may also be included, where voting is restricted. Eligible Member Groups are those full Member Groups who are currently registered with the PPN and whose membership has not lapsed.
- e) A minimum of 10 days will be permitted for the return of ballot papers, unless circumstances require that voting is cast within a shorter timeframe and the Secretariat have made all reasonable effort to make sure that voting is accessible to all Member Groups.
- f) Each Member Group is entitled to only one vote, and an individual can only vote on behalf of one group.
- g) Only full members of the PPN can vote in elections. Associate members do not have voting rights.
- h) The method of voting will be Proportional Representation by single transferable vote when there are more than two candidates.
- i) Results are recorded in order of the highest number of votes received and a panel formed from unsuccessful candidates.

(v) Post-election

- a) The election of new Representatives will be ratified by the PPN Secretariat at the next available meeting.
- b) If the elected candidate needs to step down during the term, or chooses not to take up the position, the next person on the panel will take the position. All members of the panel will remain in place for one year or until the next re-registration date, whichever happens first.
- c) The Secretariat will contact all nominees to inform them of the outcome and explain next steps to elected candidates.
- d) The Secretariat will notify all members of the PPN by email or letter of the name(s) of the Representatives elected and the Committee for which they have been elected.
- e) The Secretariat will notify the Local Authority of the name(s) of the Representative for the relevant Committee(s) and will include the contact details of the Representative(s).

(vi) Dispute resolution

- a) In the event of any dispute or conflict arising during the nomination or election process the PPN Secretariat and Resource Worker will in the first case seek to resolve it informally.
- b) If this is not successful the complainant will be asked to detail their concerns in writing to the Secretariat. The Secretariat will appoint three members, one of whom will be from the same Pillar group as the complainant, to meet with the complainant and address their concerns.
- c) This Secretariat sub-group should not comprise person(s) who know the complainant well
- d) The complainant will be allowed to bring a person of their choice to the meeting with the Secretariat sub-group
- e) Notes shall be taken of this meeting and these notes will be shared with the complainant and the sub-group
- f) This sub-group will report back to the full Secretariat on how the conflict can be resolved.
- g) If considered necessary an independent facilitator or mediator can be taken on to assist in resolving this issue/conflict