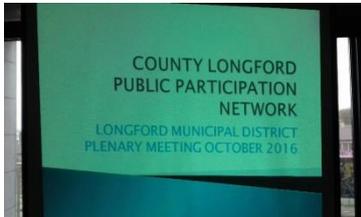


# Longford Municipal District PPN Plenary Meeting Minutes

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*Date: 27.10.16*

*Venue: Longford Municipal District Chamber, Market Square, Longford Town*



## Welcome and Introduction

Siobhán Cronogue (PPN Development Officer) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and outlining the meeting schedule.

## Recap on PPN's

The PPN Development Officer gave a quick recap on how PPN's came about and what their aim and functions were. She stated that in Sept 2013 the Department set up a working group to investigate how to get greater citizen engagement at Local Government Level. Fr. Seán Healy, Social Justice Ireland chaired this group. At the end of the allocated time period they produced a report that recommended the establishment of PPN's in every County. It became part of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. There is now a legal requirement on Local Authorities to have community representatives on all their committees and these representatives must be sourced through the PPN. She explained the main aim of the PPN is act as the link between Community, Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental Interest groups and the Local Authority. The three main functions are:

- Participation and Representation
- Capacity Building
- Information Sharing

Following this she introduced the elected PPN representative for the Longford Municipal District Connie Geraty.

## Longford Municipal District PPN Representative

Connie Gerety thanked everyone for attending and gave a brief background on the PPN Secretariat. She explained that the PPN Secretariat was made up of two representatives from each college, Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental and also one representative from each Municipal District, Longford, Granard and Ballymahon. She said that the PPN is a forum that facilitates Public Interest and Participation. The Role of the Secretariat is similar to a "fusion team" which guides and oversees the coming together of a large group of people to contribute to the

creative process of balancing the needs of people and communities with the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority within budgetary confinements and timeframes. She also stated that based on feedback from the Municipal District she had chosen two topics to cover at the first Longford MD plenary meeting of the PPN:

- Services available from the Local Enterprise Office, economic activity
- Regeneration Plan for Longford

## Guest Speakers

Connie introduced the first of the guest speakers, Michael Nevin, Local Enterprise Office, Longford County Council

### Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

Michael Nevin started his presentation by saying that the Local Enterprise Office provides advice, information and support to people in starting up or growing a business. With 31 dedicated teams across the Local Authority network in Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices offer a wide range of experience, skills and services.

He said in relation to Business Information & Advisory Services they give:

- General business advice and information provision: Business Planning, Financial Advice, Management and Accounting, How-to Guides etc. Advice and information on rates, planning, licensing etc. including cost reductions
- Advice and information for local businesses on accessing public procurement processes  
Advice on energy efficiency, sustainable development and alternative renewable energy sources
- Information and access to other government services such as:
  - Revenue [Seed Capital Scheme, Employment Investment Incentive Scheme (EIS), Revenue Job Assist]
  - Social Protection/National Employment & Entitlements Service (NEES) [Back to Work Enterprise Allowance]
  - SOLAS [Employer Job Incentive Scheme, Training]
  - Companies Registration Office
  - Credit Review Office

In terms of Enterprise Support Services they:

- Provide financial support for start-up and business development. Provide training supports e.g. Start Your Own Business Programmes, Management development support etc.
- Access to commercial/enterprise space
- Mentoring
- Access to dedicated business networks Product and Service development
- Development of web-enabled services with a focus on trading online
- Working with Community Enterprise Centres & Incubation Units
- Access to Microfinance Ireland Loan Fund
- Progression pathway for high potential start-ups and high growth companies to Enterprise Ireland including access to Business Angels, New Frontiers Programme etc.

- Access to promotional space

He informed all those in attendance about various Entrepreneurships Supports, Local Enterprise Development Services, Finance Assistance, Grant Application process and Relationship based supports. He ended his presentation by giving examples of successful business ideas that the LEO team had help budding entrepreneurs set up, Ship My Tri Bike and Finesse Medical.

Connie Gerety thanked Michael for such an insightful presentation and after some questions from the floor she introduced the second speaker of the night Terry Rooney, Regeneration Team, Longford County Council.

## Regeneration Plan

Terry explained that the Regeneration initiative had 3 pillars:

- Economic
- Social
- Physical

He said that a wide range of research was carried out in the initial set-up and scoping out of the project and that a fully resourced team was now in place with expertise in planning, engineering, technical and administrative support. While explaining the current work being carried out he listed and gave information on the following projects:

- Connolly Barracks/Longford Northern Quarter
- EU URBACT MAPS Project
- Stalled Spaces Initiative
- Ardnacassa / Palace Crescent
- Unfinished Estates / Taking in Charge
- Upgrade of Industrial Estates
- Review of Longford Town Plan
- Supporting key Tourism Initiatives
- Town & Village Renewal Scheme
- Pedestrian Bridge over River Camlin

Terry visually presented work completed to date with before and after pictures of the community space in Great Water Street and Palace Crescent:



Pic A: Community Garden Before....

Pic B: Community Garden After



Pic A: Palace Crescent Before:

Pic B: Palace Crescent After:

Terry then informed all in attendance that the Longford Town plan was now formally adopted with eight specific sites identified within the plan with a particular focus as being regeneration catalysts

- Connolly Barracks/Northern Quarter
- Market Square
- Ballymahon Street
- Shopping Centre (Tesco)
- Little Water Street
- Ballyminion Neighbourhood Centre
- Athlone Road/Industrial /Commercial Areas
- Mall / Camlin Village

In summary he said that Regeneration was a long-term project which was critical for the future of the town and county. Their work would include identifying funding streams which were key to its success, pooling of limited resources and maximising their potential while building on and creating greater inter-departmental and agency co-operation at local & national level.



Pic. A: Connie Gerety



Pic B: Micheal Nevin



Pic C: Terry Rooney

Terry closed his presentation by saying how important it was for community groups to have a say in what work was being carried out and that the Regeneration team could be contacted anytime. A very successful question and answer session followed.

Siobhan Cronogue thanked Terry and introduced the next item on the agenda. Two community questions were chosen for PPN groups to answer in order to feed in to the Longford Municipal District Health & Well- being statement and the PPN workplan 2017.

## Round Table Discussions

Question 1: What do you like about your community?

Summary of answers:

- Friendliness
- Neighbourliness
- Co-operation
- Community groups
- Togetherness
- Cathedral
- Mall
- Swimming Pool
- People are upbeat
- Good Community Spirit
- Shops
- Theatre
- Good variety of clubs and organisations
- Canal Walk and other walks
- Football clubs GAA and Soccer (Pearse Park & Slashers)

Question 2: What could be improved?

Summary of answers:

- Accommodation
- Hotels
- Branding & Promotion
- Integration
- Jobs
- Enterprise & Entrepreneurship
- Industry
- Facilities for youth
- Road Safety issues need to be addressed
- Hospital visits by voluntary drivers
- Upgrading our historic sites

Siobhán thanked everyone for attending and announced the prizes for the raffle. Winners were: 1<sup>st</sup> prize €200 – Alzheimer Society Longford Branch, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize €100 – Longford Social Services, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize €50 – Irish Wheelchair Association – Longford Branch

Siobhán Cronogue thanked Tara Patterson for volunteering at the Longford Municipal District Plenary meeting and invited groups to enjoy some refreshments and networking

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