



County Longford Public Participation Network

Submission to Longford County Council
Longford County Council Draft Strategic Policy Scheme
2019 – 2024

October 2019

INTRODUCTION

County Longford Public Participation Network was established in 2015 as part of the Putting People First Strategy.

The aims of PPNs are to

- Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner in decision making by encouraging and enabling public participation in local decision making and planning of services.
- Facilitate the selection of representatives from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors on to County decision making bodies.
- Support a process that feeds the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the PPN into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers.
- Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate by actively supporting the inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.
- Sharing information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

Currently there are 364 community groups across the three pillars affiliated to County Longford PPN, 149 in the Longford Municipal District, 98 in the Granard Municipal District and 117 in the Ballymahon Municipal District. The PPN has representatives on the following decision-making bodies in the county.

- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC): 5 Reps
- Sub Committees:
 - LEADER EVALUATION: 2 Reps
 - SICAP Monitoring Group: 2 Reps
- Strategic Policy Committee's (SPC's):
 - Climate Action & Planning SPC – 1 C&V Rep, 1 Env
 - Place Making to include Economic SPC – 1 C&V, 1 Social Inclusion
 - Strategic Infrastructure SPC – 1 C&V Rep, 1 Environmental Rep
 - Governance SPC – 2 C&V
- Joint Policing Committee: 4 Rep
- URBACT Local Group: 5 Reps
- Older Persons Council: 2 Reps
- Longford Sports Partnership: 5 Reps

- County Heritage: 1 Rep
- Longford Volunteer Centre: 1 Rep
- County Longford Childcare Committee: 1 Rep
- County Longford Drug and Alcohol Forum/ Midlands Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force: 1 Rep
- Longford Community Resources Ltd: 2 Reps
- County Longford Tourism: 3 Reps

These are members of the community who give their time voluntarily to make County Longford a better place in which to live and work and bring up families. The PPN ensures these local community volunteers have a say in the local decisions that directly affect their lives

LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT STRATEGIC POLICY SCHEME 2019 - 2024

County Longford PPN welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the County Longford Draft Strategic Policy Scheme 2019 - 2024. We acknowledge that the configuration of the SPCs cover all Longford County Council services and will therefore provide focused support and advice to the council regarding policy and practice in these specific areas.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

We particularly welcome the new Climate Action SPC and we thank LCC for requesting 1 Community & Voluntary (C&V) Rep and 1 Environmental (Env) Rep. The PPN would ask LCC to consider adding an additional C&V seat to this SPC as 84% of our membership belongs to this very diverse pillar. It is important that C&V representation covers the voice of youth, older persons, non-nationals, tidy towns and all other interested community groups. This would be a difficult task for 1 voluntary community representative.

We would also like to ask LCC to please consider adding a Social Inclusion seat on the Infrastructure SPC to specifically cover disability. We have a very active PPN Disability Network who advocate on behalf of people living with Alzheimer's, Autism, Dementia, M.S, Dyspraxia, Physical, Intellectual, Sensory and hidden disabilities. The wider membership feel so strongly about this that the C&V nominees have agreed to step aside and let a Disability Rep take the seat. An election will be held between these nominees if LCC agree to our request.

We also think it would be important for an additional C&V Rep to be added to the Place Making Economic SPC. Elections for this SPC are complete and I can confirm the 1 C&V rep works in Longford but lives in the Granard Municipal District and the 1 Social Inclusion rep works in Longford and lives in the Longford Municipal District. The PPN would welcome a 3rd C&V rep to be sought from the Ballymahon Municipal District.

The PPN are proactive in their aim to maintain a structure that is inclusive of all community groups. This year we paid particular attention to the hardest to reach communities. These are the people who need the most support and for that reason we ask LCC to consider having their voices heard and allowing them to be represented by having a Social Inclusion seat on the Good Governance SPC.

GENDER EQUALITY

LCC has particularly poor gender balance at elected representative levels. The recent Local Elections, unfortunately, saw a decrease in female representatives. Such imbalances, therefore, impact on the composition of committees. There are no female councillors on the 4 SPC's so the PPN would ask LCC to correct this imbalance by adding the additional community representatives as requested.

MEETINGS/AGENDAS/REPORTING

As all SPC members are representative of their nominating group and SPC Linkage Group it is important that they have the opportunity to consult with their Linkage Group ahead of SPC meetings and be able to report back to them in a timely fashion. To facilitate this we ask that the SPC Agenda be circulated at least four weeks in advance of the meeting. This is particularly important for PPN representatives on SPCs as they are there to represent the PPN as a whole and it is important that they have the opportunity to consult with their Linkage Group/Thematic Network ahead of SPC meetings. SPCs usually meet on a quarterly basis and as such a considerable period of time will pass until the minutes of the meeting are approved for circulation, an agreed brief report should be made available for members to circulate to their Linkage group within 1-2 weeks of the meeting taking place (This is also a recommendation which is coming through nationally in the National PPN Annual Report). Correspondence should be available by email so as to facilitate sharing of information and reduce paper usage and postage costs.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Training in relation to SPCs should be made available equally to all members of the SPC including external members. This will promote mutual understanding, better relationships, and a stronger SPC body which will lead to good decision making, better policies and greater benefits for the county. County Longford PPN is committed to ensuring community representatives have the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to fulfil their role. We welcome further collaboration to meet training needs with LCC.

County Longford PPN hope that LCC finds this submission useful and that it considers our requests/suggestions carefully and implements them in the new SPC scheme.

For further information please contact:

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