

# **Constitution of Cavan Public Participation Network**

Cavan Public Participation Network (CPPN) was established as the representative voice for all Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in Co Cavan.

The main object for which the Cavan Public Participation Network is established is: To carry on for the benefit of the community the establishment of an inclusive network promoting equality and active citizenship by providing opportunities to address common issues, promoting discussion and action; and to provide for relief of poverty and deprivation caused by social and economic circumstances and particularly to empower disadvantaged groups to participate in a programme of personal and social development.

The Cavan Public Participation Network will identify the issues that matter and try to influence policy in a way that improves the quality of life and opportunities for people within the Local Authority area of Co Cavan. Membership of the Cavan Public Participation Network is open to all community and voluntary groups, clubs and organisations in Co Cavan, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community.

The Cavan Public Participation Network is overseen by a Secretariat of 12 members elected by full member groups of the network. The Cavan Public Participation Network elects representatives to committees and organisations to speak on behalf of all member groups of the Network.

The Cavan Public Participation Network is the main link through which Cavan County Council and other decision-making bodies in the Local Authority area connect with the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors. Cavan Public Participation Network is committed to working in an open, inclusive and transparent manner on behalf of all member groups.

## **Cavan Public Participation Network**

### **1 NAME**

The name of the organisation is Cavan Public Participation Network (CPPN).

### **2 MISSION STATEMENT**

Cavan Public Participation Network is the collective voice for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in Cavan, its purpose is to improve people's well-being by involving the community in local decision-making.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF CAVAN PUBLIC**

**PARTICIPATION NETWORK** The aims and objectives are as follows:

- 3.1 To provide an open, inclusive and transparent representative structure for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in Cavan;
- 3.2 To consult with the community so as to encourage and enable public participation in local decision-making and planning of services;
- 3.3 To facilitate the selection of community representatives onto decision-making bodies and to support those representatives to be effective in their roles;
- 3.4 To foster, in particular, the inclusion and empowerment of groups and organisations with a focus on tackling disadvantage and social exclusion including rural isolation;
- 3.5 To support the member groups of Cavan Public Participation Network so that: they can develop their capacity to do their work more effectively; they can participate effectively in CPPN activities; they are included and their voices and concerns are heard;
- 3.6 To support a process that will feed a broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals from CPPN member groups into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers;
- 3.7 To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and efficient information exchange between environmental, community and voluntary and social inclusion groups and between these groups and Cavan County Council and other decision making bodies;
- 3.8 To ensure that the views expressed by CPPN representatives are mandated by Cavan Public Participation Network member organisations;
- 3.9 To promote and make known Cavan Public Participation Network and its aims and objectives, particularly to potential members;
- 3.10 To develop and promote the Cavan Public Participation Network so that the work of the CPPN is clearly recognised, acknowledged and understood by local decision-making bodies and the CPPN has a strong community voice within the Local Authority area of Cavan County Council;
- 3.11 To contribute to Cavan County Council's development and achievement of a Cavan Vision for the well-being of this and future generations.

### **4. PRINCIPLES OF CAVAN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK**

Cavan Public Participation Network and its member organisations are committed to the following principles and practices:

- 4.1 Working with a community development approach to address issues of all our member groups and issues of social exclusion;
- 4.2 Maintaining open, inclusive and transparent organisational structures;
- 4.3 Being accountable to the member groups;
- 4.4 Acting as a vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies reflecting the diversity and range of views of member groups;
- 4.5 Implementing and abiding by best practice governance structures;
- 4.6 Working in a collective and supportive way with all member groups.

## **5. MEMBERSHIP OF CAVAN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK**

Membership of Cavan Public Participation Network is open to any community and voluntary group or club, environmental group and any organisation addressing issues of social exclusion, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community within Cavan. Applications for membership will be considered by the Secretariat of Cavan Public Participation Network;

Cavan Public Participation Network is made up of full member groups and associate member groups. The CPPN will support Associate Member Organisations to fulfil the criteria for full membership;

### Criteria for Membership

- 5.1 Member Organisations should be in existence for at least one year, should have at least six registered members, should have a committee and should hold an AGM;
- 5.2 Member Organisations must agree with the aims, objectives and principles set out in Sections 3 and 4;
- 5.3 Member Organisations must carry out their activities in an open and transparent manner;
- 5.4 Member Organisations must have a base in and/or be active in Cavan;
- 5.5 Member Organisations must complete and return a membership application form, together with their constitution and minutes of their most recent AGM;
- 5.6 Because of the separation of the functions of public representatives and the CPPN, Councillors, TDs, Senators, and MEPs should not be the CPPN contact point for member organisations;
- 5.7 Organisations, which at the time of application, meet all other criteria except some element(s) of sections 5.1 and/or 5.4 may apply for Associate Membership;
- 5.8 Associate Member Organisations do not have the power to make nominations, or have voting rights, however they can put forward motions;

- 5.9 An organisation's membership of the CPPN may be reviewed by the Cavan Public Participation Network Secretariat if at any time the organisation claims to speak on behalf of/or represent the CPPN without mandate;
- 5.10 A member organisation shall cease to be a member of the CPPN if the organisation no longer qualifies under the conditions laid down for membership.

The following are not eligible for membership of Cavan Public Participation Network:

- State or semi-state bodies;
- Local development agencies;
- Groups who have representation through other pillars of social partnership e.g. trade unions, farming and business organisations.

The Director of Service for Community and Enterprise in Cavan County Council and his/her nominees shall support the operation of Cavan Public Participation Network, and may attend CPPN meetings and contribute to discussions, however they shall not have voting rights.

## **6. PLENARY MEETINGS**

The Plenary (all the member organisations together) is the key decision maker of the CPPN on operational issues, meeting at least twice a year.

- 6.1. Member Organisations must be given at least 21 days' notice of a Plenary Meeting.
- 6.2. Notice of a Plenary Meeting should include details of any elections that will be taking place (see Section 11).
- 6.3. The quorum for a Plenary Meeting shall be 15 full member groups (i.e. a minimum of 15 persons representing 15 separate Full Member Organisations).
- 6.4. An Extraordinary Plenary Meeting (EPM) may be called by the Secretariat or by notice in writing by 10 Full Member Organisations. At least 14 days' notice shall be given of an Extraordinary Plenary and the notice must contain a specification of the business to be discussed at the meeting.
- 6.5. As the Cavan Public Participation Network develops, Plenary meetings will be arranged at a Municipal District level. The notice period for a Municipal District Plenary shall be the same, however the quorum shall be 6 full members (i.e. a minimum of 6 persons representing 6 separate Full Member Organisations).

## **7. SECRETARIAT**

Cavan Public Participation Network will be overseen by a Secretariat of 12 members elected by the 3 Sectors (times 2) and the 3 Municipal Districts (times 2). Secretariat is a flat structure. Meetings will be chaired on a six month rotational basis by a rotating Chair. The purpose of the Secretariat will be:

- 7.1 To ensure the aims and objectives of the Cavan Public Participation Network are met;
- 7.2 To ensure that member groups are informed of developments relevant to their groups;
- 7.3 To represent member group' interests;
- 7.4 To ensure the proper functioning of the CPPN between Plenary meetings;
- 7.5 To facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary
- 7.6 To employ a Resource Worker and a Support Worker with contracts of employment to achieve the CPPN's objectives through the implementation of the Annual Workplan;
- 7.7 To develop Cavan Public Participation Network into an effective collective voice for community groups in the Local Authority area.
- 7.8 To engage with the CPPN Representatives as laid out in the CPPN Representatives Charter

## **8. SECRETARIAT MEETINGS**

- 8.1 The Secretariat will meet every two months or as deemed necessary.
- 8.2 The quorum for Secretariat meetings is half or more of the current members.
- 8.3 If after 30 minutes from the scheduled starting time, a quorum is not present the meeting shall stand adjourned to a date to be determined by the Secretariat.
- 8.4 If at an adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within 30 minutes from the appointed start time, the members present shall be a quorum.
- 8.5 The Secretariat will strive to make decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, those present will make decisions by way of a simple majority vote.
- 8.6 Where possible all reports given at Secretariat meetings and general meetings should be written and circulated in advance.
- 8.7 The appropriate method of reporting for some meetings may be verbal.
- 8.8 An Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Secretariat will be held each year to adopt the annual accounts. CPPN will continue the rotating Chair process for Secretariat meetings. However for the administrative purposes of undertaking and maintaining CPPN regulatory requirements of the voluntary non-profit organization, the Secretariat shall appoint a Chair, a Secretary and a Treasurer on an annual basis at the AGM and be the three Trustees for CPPN.

## **9. REPRESENTATIVES – CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Cavan Public Participation Network elects representatives to sit on committees and organisations on behalf of all member organisations of the network. To be eligible for election as a representative of Cavan Public Participation Network a person must be:

- 9.1 An active member of a Cavan Public Participation Network Full Member Organisation;
- 9.2 Nominated by their Member Organisation;
- 9.3 Committed to the aims, objectives and principles of Cavan Public Participation Network;
- 9.4 Willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant body that he/she is to sit on;
- 9.5 Willing to be representative of all member organisations of Cavan Public Participation Network, effectively acting in the interest of the PPN as a whole;
- 9.6 Willing to uphold, support and defend the policies, decisions and position of Cavan Public Participation Network;
- 9.7 Able to articulate, discuss, debate and negotiate on behalf of Cavan Public Participation Network;
- 9.8 Readily contactable by other member organisations.

Representatives of Cavan Public Participation Network will seek to:

- 9.9 Promote understanding of the issues and difficulties facing the community sector;
- 9.10 Present the views and policies of Cavan Public Participation Network to the meeting and ensure that they are taken into account in the decision-making process;
- 9.11 Bring issues of relevance to the community sector back to Cavan Public Participation Network for the information of all groups in the form of a written report,
- 9.12 Advise Cavan Public Participation Network of issues which require a response, formulation of policy or other action;
- 9.13 Receive instruction from Cavan Public Participation Network through a Linkage Group/ Thematic Network, Plenary meetings, or the Secretariat, as to how the CPPN should be represented;
- 9.14 Attend Cavan Public Participation Network Plenary Meetings, relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network meetings and joint meetings between the Secretariat and CPPN representatives;

## **10. CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE SECRETARIAT MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESIGN THEIR POSITION**

Secretariat Members and Representatives would be required to resign their position if they:

- 10.1 Are no longer a member of the Cavan Public Participation Network Member Organisation that nominated them;
- 10.2 No longer have the formal support of their nominating Member Organisation;
- 10.3 Fail to attend three consecutive meetings of the Secretariat and/or committees they were elected to without reasonable explanation;
- 10.4 Declare as a candidate for local, general or European elections.

## **11. ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS AND VOTING**

- 11.1 Nominations for Cavan Public Participation Network representative roles and seats on the Secretariat shall be invited through electronic communication with member groups.
- 11.2 When the number of nominations received exceeds the number of seats available a ballot will take place.
- 11.3 Each Full Member Organisation shall be entitled to one vote only and must have a representative present to cast that vote.
- 11.4 Individuals can only represent and vote on behalf of one Full Member Organisation at any Plenary meeting.

## **12. ELECTIONS TO THE SECRETARIAT**

There are 12 seats on the Secretariat, which must be filled as follows:

- 12.1 Full Member Organisations from each of the Municipal Districts of the Local Authority area elect two representatives each from the three Municipal District areas.
- 12.2 Full Member Organisations from each of the three electoral sectors: Community and Voluntary; Environmental and Social Inclusion elect two representatives each;
- 12.3 Election is for a maximum term of three years;
- 12.4 No person may serve more than two consecutive three year terms on the Secretariat;
- 12.5 Cavan Public Participation Network will strive to achieve a gender balance on the Secretariat;

- 12.6 To help prevent loss of all experience from the group at one time, it is preferable if the Secretariat is renewed in line with Section 6 of The PPN Handbook.
- 12.7 Members of the Secretariat who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive three year terms on the Secretariat.
- 12.8 Should a member of the Secretariat be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, the Secretariat shall contact full member groups of the relevant Municipal District or College seeking nominations for a new representative, who may be elected at a Plenary meeting, or agreed through electronic correspondence.

### **13. ELECTION OF CPPN REPRESENTATIVES**

A current list of Cavan Public Participation Network representative positions is shown on the CPPN Website.

- 13.1 The criteria for and responsibilities of representatives of Cavan Public Participation Network are set out in The PPN Handbook.
- 13.2 Representatives of Cavan Public Participation Network will initially be elected at a Plenary meeting, and as Linkage Groups/Thematic Networks are formed, by the relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network;
- 13.3 Election is for a maximum term of three years and no person may serve more than two consecutive three year terms;
- 13.4 Should a representative be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, the Secretariat shall contact the relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network seeking nominations for a new representative, who may be elected at a meeting of the Linkage Group/Thematic Network, or agreed through electronic correspondence with the Linkage Group/Thematic Network.
- 13.5 Members of the Secretariat of Cavan Public Participation Network may be elected to a representative role.
- 13.6 It is preferable that a person would hold only one CPPN representative role, and a representative may not hold both a seat on the Local Community Development Committee and a Strategic Policy Committee, or seats on two Strategic Policy Committees.
- 13.7 Representatives of Cavan Public Participation Network who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive three year terms in the same role.



## **14. FINANCES**

- 14.1 Cavan Public Participation Network finances will be overseen and monitored by the Secretariat with an agreed Memorandum of Understanding and an agreed Service Level Agreement to be in place with the relevant funding bodies. The Secretariat shall operate robust financial controls in line with an agreed financial policy with regard to all income and expenditure.
- 14.2 Accounts shall be kept of all sums of money received and expended by the CPPN and accounts will be made available to members prior to the Secretariat AGM where the annual accounts will be presented for adoption.
- 14.3 The CPPN may introduce an annual member group fee at the Plenary Meeting sufficient to cover costs associated with the work of the organisation. If this arises, there will be a differential rate for funded and non-funded organisations.

## **15. AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION**

- 15.1 Any Member Organisation may put forward a motion to amend the Constitution.
- 15.2 Motions to amend the Constitution must be made in writing to the Secretariat 14 days in advance of a Plenary Meeting.
- 15.3 Member Organisations must be informed of any motions to amend the Constitution at least 7 days in advance of a Plenary Meeting.
- 15.4 Motions to amend the Constitution must be discussed at a Plenary Meeting and shall require a two-thirds majority of Full Member groups present and entitled to vote;
- 15.5 The Secretariat will ensure that a formal review of the Cavan Public Participation Network constitution will take place at least every 3 years.

## **Appendix**

### **Explanation of Terms**

#### **Social Inclusion Sector**

A Social Inclusion Organisation is one whose main activity is working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected. It does not include formal education (schools colleges), or large institutional health or social service providers.

#### **Environmental Sector**

Environmental Organisation is one whose primary objectives and activities is environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability and includes Green Communities Groups that work to empower community groups to improve their local environment, enhance biodiversity and reduce their resource usage and local Environmental Action Networks that work to promote the well-being, protection and enhancement of the environment.

#### **Community & Voluntary Sector**

A Community & Voluntary Organisation is one whose primary activity is other than social inclusion or environmental protection and/or environmental sustainability and amongst others covers groups working in the following areas: community development; tidy towns; arts and culture and sport.

#### **Linkage Group /Thematic Network**

Community Linkage Groups/Thematic Networks are made up of community groups who have registered an interest in a particular issue or committee. They offer an opportunity for groups to come together, network, exchange ideas, get informed, discuss important issues affecting the community and feed into policy making.

#### **Secretariat**

The Group elected by the CPPN to coordinate the activities of the CPPN and communicating and disseminating information with the CPPN membership

#### **Plenary**

A Plenary is a meeting of all the groups registered with the CPPN

#### **Municipal District**

There are three Municipal Districts in Co Cavan and they are: Cavan-Belturbet; Bailieborough-Cootehill and Ballyjamesduff