



**Public
Participation
Network**
South Dublin County

Constitution

Version history

Version	Date Adopted	Facilitator	Note
1.0	17/11/2025	Lesley Barrett	

Document controls

Action	Responsibility
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Implementation	Secretariat, Plenary, Staff and Supervisory Working Group, Members
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South Dublin County PPN Constitution

1. Introduction / Preamble

The PPN's primary objective is to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the local authority's areas of responsibility.

The participation of all citizens in public life and discourse and their right to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities are at the centre of democracy.

The PPN facilitates access to participation in the decision-making process at local government level and their active role in the policy making and oversight activities of South Dublin County Council.

Community groups and organisations that wish to participate must be a member of the PPN.

1.1 Name

The organisation's name is South Dublin County Participation Network otherwise referred to as South Dublin County PPN or the PPN.

1.2 Aims

The aims of South Dublin County PPN shall be to:

- Represent the Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary Sector's interests of South Dublin County on Policy Making and Advisory Bodies.
- Participate in and contribute to the well-being of this and future generations.
- Proactively promote the benefits and advantages of Community Representation on Boards and Committees.
- Promote the work, existence and benefit of public participation to community-based organisations and groups across the county.
- Facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information among and between communities, the local authority and state structures.
- Identify issues of both individual and collective concern and advocate to influence policy locally and nationally in relation to these issues.
- Monitor and evaluate existing policy frameworks of the local authority for impact, outcome and output.
- Actively support the inclusion and participation of socially excluded groups or communities experiencing high levels of poverty, discrimination or disadvantage.
- Support the members so that they can develop their own capacity and participate effectively in PPN activities.

2. Mission, Vision, Values and Principles

2.1 Mission

The Mission of the PPN is to:

- Keep members informed (serve as a networking and information hub).
- Make member stronger (build the capacity of member groups); and
- Help represent the community (coordinate and support the participation and representation of the community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors in the county in the policymaking process;).

2.2 Vision

That the PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of economic, social, community and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.

2.3 Values

The following values are important to us. They are what we aim to be.

- **Inclusive:** We actively seek to include groups who may feel that they are not usually welcomed or listened to.
- **Participatory:** We encourage our members to get involved in all aspects of the operation of the PPN. We welcome all feedback and ideas about how we can do better.
- **Independent:** We are independent. We have our own staff. We manage our own budget and are mandated by our members.
- **Valuing of diversity:** We recognise that the PPN is made up of groups with many different opinions. We do not expect that all our members will agree on everything. We will always feedback the diverse range of views our members have.
- **Transparent:** We are open about everything we do. We try to have fair and clear policies and procedures. We communicate our activity with all our members on a regular basis.
- **Respectful:** We respect all individuals involved in the PPN. We value the dignity of each person. We treat people how we would like to be treated.

2.4 Principles

The following principles guide our behaviour. These help us fulfil our values.

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- **Accountable:** to its members by implementing and abiding by good Governance structures, policies and procedures.
- **Democratic:** in its process.
- **Committed:** through its participation and engagement to attend all meetings and report back to its membership.
- **Communicative:** in a clear, concise, simple and timely manner utilising modern technology as appropriate with all members.
- **Supportive:** of new and inexperienced members to develop their skills and capacity.
- **Proactive:** in circulating all relevant information to the PPN membership.

3. Membership

3.1 Full membership

3.1.1 Full membership criteria

Full membership of the PPN is open to community groups and organisations who:

- Have an official address within the local authority area and are volunteer led.
- Are not for profit, non-political and non-sectarian organisation.
- Are independent.
- Have at least five (5) members and are open to new members.
- Are in existence for at least six (6) months and meet regularly.
- Have an appropriate formal governance structure with an agreed set of rules and meet at least quarterly.

3.1.2 National organisations

National organisations are eligible for membership if they are headquartered or have an official local branch within the local authority area.

3.1.3 Term of membership

Once an organisation has become a member of the PPN they shall be required to reaffirm their membership details every two years prior to the Annual General Plenary Meeting in that year.

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3.1.4 Registration process

The PPN shall have a registration process in place to assess eligibility for membership and ensure that the appropriate electoral college has been chosen. This process is overseen by the Secretariat and reported back to the Plenary. The PPN may seek copies of relevant documentation to validate membership.

3.2 Associate membership

Associate Membership provides a pathway and a link between key community groups and organisations and services in the local authority area who do not meet the criteria for full membership, to have a voice on matters of interest.

3.2.1 Rights of associate membership

Associate members can:

- Attend Linkage Groups and Plenary and contribute to discussion.
- Attend the PPN training and events; and
- Receive information.

Voting rights are not extended to Associate members.

3.2.2 Associate membership criteria

Associate membership of the PPN is open to groups and organisations not eligible for full membership but who:

- Engage with or support the PPN.
- Are a valid community group, organisation or service.
- Work is related, supportive or similar fields to that of the PPN or its members; and
- Agree to comply with PPN policies and constitution.

Organisations who may qualify for Associate Membership include but not limited to:

- Local Development Companies.
- University Departments or research centres, colleges, other third level groups or associations.
- Charitable trusts and Foundations; and
- Other Civil society, voluntary and community organisations.

3.3 Membership Electoral Colleges

The PPN Membership is divided into three (3) Colleges. Each organisation or group must decide to participate in the “college” which represents their primary interest:

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3.3.1 Social Inclusion

The main aim or activity of our social inclusion members is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are:

- marginalised in society.
- living in poverty; or
- living with unemployment.

Social inclusion members work to develop and build sustainable communities. They aim to build communities that promote the values of equality and inclusion and that have respect for human rights.

They focus on working with the most marginalised, including but not limited to disadvantaged young people, ethnic minorities, homeless people, older adults, Travellers, people with disabilities, substance misusers, or women.

3.3.2 Environmental

The main aim of environment members is to protect or sustain the environment. The national environmental pillar decides what type of groups can be members of the environmental pillar.

Environment members work on building sustainable communities and achieving a sustainable future. Their work can include developing organic horticulture, environmental education, preventing the spread of invasive species, protecting wildlife, recycling, resource efficiency, and sustainable planning.

3.3.3 Community and Voluntary

The main aim or activity of community and voluntary members is to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of their community. The community and voluntary pillar are the largest and most diverse of the three PPN pillars.

Volunteers are essential to the sustainability of community and voluntary member groups. The types of groups in this college may include active citizenship, arts, community safety, drama, emergency services, festivals, heritage leisure, residents' associations, sports or youth.

4. Structure and Management

The PPN structure is “flat” which means there is no permanent chairperson, and the ultimate decision maker is all members of the PPN. The structure is composed of:

- Plenary.
- Secretariat; and
- Linkage Groups.

It is therefore imperative that strong and clear governance procedures are in place that respect the flat structure and provide the environment for the PPN to conduct its business in an efficient, effective, and accountable manner.

4.1 Plenary

- The full Membership (excluding Associate Members) is referred to as the Plenary which is the Governing Body with overall responsibility for the PPN and shall meet at least twice (2) a year in Plenary Session. The first session of the year includes the Annual General Meeting of the Membership.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects a Secretariat which through the diversity of its membership is representative of the three (3) colleges, where vacancies have risen.
- The Plenary at its Annual General Meeting elects representatives to the Local Community Development Committee, where vacancies have risen.
- At least one (1) member from each registered group or organisation holding Full Membership shall be entitled to attend and shall have one (1) vote on behalf of their organisation.
- The dates for convening Plenary Sessions shall be decided by the Plenary in session at the Annual General Meeting of the Plenary and in the absence of such decision, by the Secretariat.
- Notice of Plenary Sessions shall be circulated to all members not less than four (4) weeks prior to the date of such Session.
- The agenda shall be set by the Secretariat. Items and motions for discussion shall be forwarded by members at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting.
- All Plenary Sessions shall be conducted under Standing Orders Procedures – in consultation with members.

4.2 Plenary quorum

- The quorum for a plenary shall be 10% of member organisations and at least one-third of members of the Secretariat.

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- If over 50% of the Secretariat Members' terms have expired by the date of the holding of the Plenary meeting, the requirement that the quorum include one-third of members of the Secretariat will cease to apply.
- If a quorum is not available, those present may elect to proceed with either of the following:
 - Option A: Determine that the current attendance at the plenary is sufficient for the plenary to proceed. Decisions made at this plenary will be validly passed by a simple majority (that is, half plus one) of those in attendance.
 - Option B: The meeting should be postponed and rescheduled for a more suitable date, no later than one calendar month after the date of the original meeting. If a quorum is not, revert to Option A.
 - In any event,

4.3 Extraordinary General Meetings

- Extraordinary General Meeting of full Members shall be held at any time on the decision of the Secretariat or on receipt by the Secretariat of a concise request of not more than one (1) A4 page signed by 30 full Members (excluding Associated Members) to convene such a meeting. Instructions on supports available to gather signatures are available in Appendix 2.
- The Secretariat shall decide within five (5) working days of receipt of such request the date, time, and place such a meeting shall be held which shall be not more than twenty-one (21) working days following receipt of the request by Secretariat.
- The Notice to members shall state:
 - Date, time and place of the meeting.
 - Business to be transacted.
 - Text of original request or proposal.
- The Facilitator of the Secretariat for the time being shall act as the Facilitator of the Extraordinary General Meeting or where the Facilitator fails to act the Secretariat shall appoint one of its Members to act as Facilitator. Where the Secretariat fails to appoint a Facilitator, the Extraordinary General meeting shall appoint a facilitator by show of voting paddles or ballot by simple majority vote. Only votes or eligible members attending are permitted.
- Where the Secretariat fails or omits to comply with such request to hold a meeting or Secretariat has resigned in block, then the member organisation who initiated the request in the first instance shall convene such an Extraordinary meeting at a date, time, and place stipulated by them and only on the original

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request and such notice shall state the business to be transacted and text of original request or proposal.

- A poll demanded regarding the election of a Facilitator for the meeting by any member shall be taken forthwith.
- All Extraordinary General Meetings shall be conducted under Standing Orders Procedures – in consultation with members.

4.4 Secretariat

4.4.1 Membership

- The Secretariat consists of thirteen (13) members. The seats of the Secretariat will be allocated as follows:
 - 3 Community pillar
 - 3 Environment pillar
 - 3 Social Inclusion pillar
 - 1 Clondalkin, Newcastle, Rathcoole, Saggart and Brittas Area
 - 1 Lucan / Palmerstown / North Clondalkin Area
 - 1 Rathfarnham / Templeogue / Firhouse / Bohernabreena Area
 - 1 Tallaght Area

Where the number or geography of the area committees of the local authority change, this change shall be reflected in the makeup of the Secretariat without a requirement to change the constitution – if the area committees are officially defined on the local authority's website.

- At each Annual General Meeting – Secretariat members who have served three (3) years are required to step down. Members having stepped down may offer themselves for re-election.
- A member may not serve on the Secretariat for more than six (6) consecutive years and having so served shall not be entitled to offer themselves for election for a further one (1) year. In total, a member shall not serve more than a total of nine (9) years.
- The quorum for Secretariat meetings shall be one third plus one (1).
- For membership of the Secretariat, an individual must be attached to and nominated by a PPN member organisation of a relevant electoral college. The Electorate for that position is comprised of the members of the Electoral College.
- A panel shall be compiled from the next highest candidates for the purpose of filling vacancies which may occur in the Secretariat in respect of that college between Annual General Meetings of the PPN.

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- Any vacancy arising on the Secretariat between the annual electoral process shall be filled by the next highest candidate on the aforementioned panel willing to serve on the Secretariat.
- Secretariat Members shall attend the two (2) Plenary Sessions in the year.
- Any member elected to the Secretariat who fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings of the Secretariat shall automatically remove themselves from that position and the vacancy arising shall be filled forthwith by the next available member on the panel as set out above.
- The Secretariat shall have authority to fill any temporary vacancy being 3 months or more arising from a member being absent on – Leave of Absence, Study Leave, Maternity Leave, etc.

4.4.2 Responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is the key day-to-day administrative body within the PPN Structure. It:

- Shall meet at least nine (9) times per annum – monthly – with no meetings in June, July and December.
- Ensures the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenary meetings, implementing decisions of the plenary.
- Manages the PPN budget including on-going financial matters and decisions.
- Manages the development and implementation of the PPN's strategic plan.
- Establishes sub-groups to address in detail certain defined matters that arise from time to time.
- Cooperates with the relevant national PPN structures established for Monitoring and Evaluation of PPN's recommendations or guidelines issued by such groups.
- Agrees an annual work plan with the local authority.
- Engages with the South Dublin County Council regarding the Council's oversight responsibility.
- Appoints a Facilitator of Secretariat Meetings with a term of Plenary to Plenary. The position of Facilitator should rotate to ensure Secretariat members acquire relevant experience of this function. The Facilitator's successor should be selected prior to the Plenary meeting at which the facilitator steps down.

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- Appoints a member to the PPN Supervisory Working Group with a term of 2 years.
- Manages the work of the Coordinator, who acts as the secretary of the Secretariat, and who maintains the minutes, correspondence regarding all Secretariat meetings and Plenaries.
- Reviews and approves the minutes of each previous meeting.
- Administers the PPN in accordance with best practice and to the highest possible standard (to be agreed between the members, and if necessary, approved by the Plenary) as outlined in the prevailing PPN guidelines as issued by the funders.

4.4.3 Secretariat Subgroups

- Subgroups of the Secretariat may be established at a Secretariat meeting for a specific project or purpose.
- A minimum of 3 Secretariat members is required to sit on a subgroup.
- The subgroup must submit a written report at each Secretariat meeting.
- The term of a subgroup is from the Secretariat meeting where it is established to the next scheduled Secretariat meeting. The Secretariat may decide to extend the subgroups term until the next Secretariat meeting. This request must be included in the aforementioned written report.
- The Secretariat will set the terms of reference of the Subgroup at the time of establishment. This will be agreed and included in the minutes. The terms of reference of the subgroup will state the membership, purpose and the decision-making capacity of the subgroup in carrying out its work.
- The Secretariat may decide to invite non-Secretariat members to sit on a subgroup if they feel the addition would be appropriate. Any non-Secretariat members invited to sit on the subgroup must be in addition to the minimum of 3 Secretariat members.
- A short report on the activity of any Secretariat subgroups will be included in the PPN Activity Report published at each Plenary meeting.
- The quorum for a meeting is 2 members of the subgroup.

4.4.4 Role of the Secretariat facilitator

- As Facilitator of the Secretariat, the Facilitator shall:

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- Agree the framework with the resource worker for Secretariat meetings (e.g. timeframe, location, facilities etc.).
- Agree the agenda of each Secretariat meeting.
- Manage the progression of agenda items of each Secretariat meeting in terms of the items under discussion, the reaching of decisions and the time allocated.
- Review, agree and ensure the distribution in a timely fashion draft minutes in conjunction with the resource worker.
- Ensure that approved minutes are available.
- Normally act as the primary representative of the PPN network to external bodies or in emergency situations. This role may be delegated.
- Sign off on official PPN correspondence.
- Facilitate the Plenary meeting that takes at the end of their term.

If the Secretariat is dissatisfied with the conduct or performance of the facilitator, the facilitator may be voted out of that role during a scheduled Secretariat meeting, by notification in writing prior to such meeting.

4.4.5 Emergency and other meetings of the Secretariat

Emergency meetings of the Secretariat shall be held where not less than five (5) members of the Secretariat sign a request that the Secretariat be convened setting out clearly the reasons for such a meeting. Such a request shall be sent to the Facilitator responsible for the operation of Secretariat. On receipt of such request the Facilitator shall immediately arrange for the holding of the meeting within seven (7) days of the date of such receipt.

Other meetings of the Secretariat shall be held where the Facilitator is of the opinion that a situation has arisen for the holding of such a meeting.

5. Linkage Groups

Linkage Groups bring together stakeholder organisations and groups who are members of the PPN with a common interest to discuss their diverse views and interests in a specific policy area. Linkage Groups may also be referred to as Thematic Networks. This is a pathway for such organisations and groups to have a real input into policy in their respective area of operation. Linkage Groups are an essential component of the work of the PPN.

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Linkage Groups operate under the auspices of the PPN Plenary, and report to the PPN Secretariat. The Linkage Groups are governed by a term of reference (separate to this constitution).

5.1 Principles governing Linkage Groups

Linkage Groups are:

- Organised to advocate on behalf of the PPN on specific themes.
- Open to membership from all PPN member organisations.
- Based on a specific theme or themes.
- Transparent in their operations and free from conflicts of interest.
- Required to report regularly to the Secretariat and Plenary; and
- Facilitated independently by an appointed facilitator from the membership of the Linkage Group who is not an elected PPN Representative on an external committee.

6. Representation

All Community and Voluntary Sector Representatives on Decision and Policy Making Bodies of external agencies must come through the PPN Electoral Process.

A PPN Representative is any member of the PPN elected to office on behalf of the PPN, including but not limited to the Secretariat, a Representative to an external Committee, a Linkage Group Facilitator and any other PPN Representative role.

6.1 Principles governing PPN Representation

All PPN Representatives on Boards or Committees of Policy Making and Advisory Bodies of and for South Dublin County Council shall report to and take direction from their respective Linkage Group or where a relevant Linkage Group does not exist, from the Plenary or the Secretariat on behalf of the Plenary.

All contributions and views expressed by PPN Representatives shall be in line with the guidance or mandate from the Linkage Group or Plenary.

A member shall only represent the PPN on one (1) Board or Committee not including the Secretariat.

A representative is elected for a fixed term of three (3) years to represent the issues of PPN members on a Board or Committee. In circumstances where the receiving committee has longer term lengths, the PPN must still facilitate an election process once the three (3) year term has been served.

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It is the duty of a PPN Representative to uphold this constitution and abide by the PPN Representatives Charter.

6.2 PPN Representative Quality Control

Induction is a compulsory element of taken on a PPN representative role. Induction must be undertaken by each PPN Rep for each new term they serve on the PPN. Induction must be completed within six (6) months of their appointment, otherwise the PPN Rep will be deemed automatically deselected.

The PPN shall validate that all PPN Representatives are still active with their nominating organisation on an annual basis, and that their organisation continues to be eligible for PPN membership.

An annual refresher shall take place for all PPN Representatives on the role of the PPN, the current priorities and work plan of the PPN and any material updates to PPN operations.

6.3 Vacancies

In the event of a PPN vacancy occurring, an election shall be called by the Secretariat if no panel to fill vacancies exists. This shall be done in line with the PPN's election process.

6.4 Deselection of Representatives

In the event of a representative selected to represent the PPN fails to carry out their duties in an appropriate manner, as outlined in this Constitution or the PPN Representatives Charter, the PPN may deselect the representative in the following manner:

1. A proposal to deselect a representative may be made by:
 - a. the nominating Linkage Group,
 - b. the Secretariat,
 - c. a simple majority of delegates at a Plenary meeting of the PPN.
2. Where the proposal to deselect a representative is made by the nominating linkage group, the proposal to deselect will be placed on the agenda for the next Linkage Group meeting, and the representative concerned will be notified of the intention to raise the matter at least four (4) weeks before the meeting at which the deselection is to be considered. The representative will be given an opportunity to address the issue at the Linkage Group meeting. The deselection will be effective if passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present at the Linkage Group meeting.

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3. Where the proposal to deselect, a representative is made by the Secretariat in respect of a PPN Rep nominated by a Linkage Group, the process outlined in 8.4 part 2 is followed.
4. Where the proposal to deselect a representative is made by the Secretariat and the proposed representative is a Secretariat member, the proposal to deselect will be placed on the agenda for the next Plenary meeting, and the representative concerned will be notified of the intention to raise the matter at least ten (10) days before the meeting at which the deselection is to be considered. The representative will be given an opportunity to address the issue at the Plenary meeting. The deselection will be effective if passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present at the Plenary meeting.
5. Where the proposal to deselect, a representative is made by the Plenary, the proposal to deselect will be heard immediately at the Plenary meeting. The representative concerned, if present, will be given the opportunity to address the issue at the Plenary meeting. The deselection will be effective if passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present at the Plenary meeting.
6. Where a representative is deselected, a notice of deselection shall be issued by email to the representative.
7. In all the above cases, the deselected representative may choose to appeal the decision. Notice of appeal must be served to the Secretariat within seven (7) days of the "notice of deselection" being issued. The representative shall be withdrawn from their role during the appeal period, and the role shall not be filled by the PPN during the appeal period. The appeal shall be heard at the following Plenary meeting where a final decision is made by the Plenary based on simple majority.

The following circumstances will result in automatic deselection of a PPN Representative with no appeal mechanism:

- Where the nominating organisation of a PPN Representative ceases to exist, or the PPN Representative is no longer associated with the organisation, they shall immediately cease to be a PPN Representative.
- Where the PPN Representative misses 3 prescribed meetings in a row. Prescribed meetings include Secretariat meetings (for Secretariat members), Plenary meetings, Linkage Group meetings and meetings of the committee they are nominated to.

7. Code of Conduct

All stakeholders directly involved in the PPN shall always conduct themselves in a professional manner and in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and the Code of Conduct adopted thereunder.

The Code of Conduct shall be signed by every Member of the PPN elected to a representative position on the various committees and boards where the PPN has such representation and by the members of the Secretariat and by every member who acts as a Facilitator.

8. Financial Matters

8.1 Financial Records

Financial Records shall comply with accounting standards and processes and the directions of funders. A copy of the Financial Statement approved by Secretariat shall be circulated to all members prior to the relevant Plenary meeting.

The PPN's annual budget and annual expenditure account shall be published on the PPN website.

8.2 PPN Representative Expenses

Expenses of PPN Representatives in the carrying out of their duties are covered as laid out in the PPN Expenses policy and directed by the Government department responsible for PPNs.

9. Amendments to the Constitution

A proposal to amend the Constitution may be made:

- A. By the Secretariat.
- B. By not less than 30 active members at least 10 days prior to the date of the Plenary.

The proposal shall be circulated to the membership and placed on the agenda for the next Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Plenary convened for that purpose.

The amendment shall be effective forthwith if passed by simple majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.

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