



A Representative's Charter

For the Community & Voluntary Representatives of

Carlow Public Participation Network (Carlow PPN)

Values and Vision

The objectives of Carlow PPN is to establish for the benefit of the community an inclusive networking body promoting equality and active citizenship and to empower disadvantaged groups to participate in a programme of personal and social development.

The aim is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate their diverse range of views and interests within the local government system. We aim to demonstrate that regular public participation builds trust and confidence and demonstrates that change is possible. Individuals and community groups can become more responsible for their quality of life and for the quality of life for their future generations.

The role of the PPN is to advance community and voluntary interests utilising community development principles and will work in partnership with Carlow County Council and local development agencies to deliver meaningful community led local development that benefits Carlow local communities.

Our Community Development Values:

- Equality and Anti-discrimination;
- Social Inclusion;
- Collective Action;
- Community Empowerment;
- To allow the diversity of values and interests to be facilitated and involved in decision making.

Role of Carlow PPN Representatives

Carlow PPN secretariat members represent the community on a number of county wide bodies including Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Carlow PPN representatives are required to bring the policies/views of the PPN to the work of the committees to which they are elected/appointed and not just the views of their own organisation. They are required to report back to the PPN through the agreed reporting procedures on a regular basis. As a Carlow PPN representative, members

are required to bring local experience and concerns to the PPN and feed information relating to the PPN's work back into their local municipal district and/or sector. If there is more than one Carlow PPN member represented on a committee, they should report back according to their Pillar.

Each member/representative holds the trust of the PPN as s/he is actively representing the PPN and the wider community. This trust, teamwork and respect is an essential element to the effective operation of the Carlow PPN. Without it, or the sense of cohesion that is apparent in Carlow, the Carlow PPN would be less effective. The PPN has an open and transparent and democratic structure which caters for the legal and financial requirements and also serves the community well as the community voice is at its centre.

Terms of Reference for Effective Carlow PPN Representation

Individual Carlow PPN Secretariat Members

- To attend up to 80% of Network meetings and take an active role in the team work.
- Represent the views of their College and not just their own organisation.
- To support and help draw up, develop and implement a Carlow PPN work programme.
- To actively take part in the activities organised by the Carlow PPN.
- To engage in local events and listen to what people are saying on the street, in the shops, at work, on the sports field and note the issues and concerns coming up.
- To bring these concerns to the Carlow PPN meetings.
- To report the work being done by the Carlow PPN back to their community. This will build a good supportive relationship between the Carlow PPN and the local community.

Carlow PPN Representatives on County Wide Bodies

- Represent the views of all the members of the Linkage Group and not just those of their own organisation.
- To familiarise yourself with the work of the countywide Committee(s) and, if necessary, research the issues.
- To ensure you know the 'policy/views' of the Carlow PPN in relation to the Committee(s) you are on and to seek clarification if you are unclear.
- To take an active part in the Carlow PPN policy making aspect of the work in relation to the Committee(s) you represent.
- To attend the meetings of the Committee(s) to represent, voice and argue for the policy/views of the Carlow PPN at the Committee(s).
- To report back to the Carlow PPN on a regular basis using the reporting processes agreed.

- To inform your local community of the policy and/or work of the Carlow PPN/Committee(s).
- To assess how the Carlow PPN/Committee work/policy impacts on your local community.
- To attend Carlow PPN representative's training and monitoring meetings.

The Carlow PPN has the power to replace a representative serving on a county wide Committee, on a Strategic Policy Committee and on other relevant Working Groups if they do not fulfil the above requirements. The Community Development Worker will bring to a Secretariat meeting a de-selection proposal on foot of non attendance of a representative at meetings and/or evidence of non observance of Carlow PPN policies being supported by a Carlow PPN representative at the appropriate committee meetings.

Representing the Carlow PPN

The elected/appointed representatives are required to represent the Carlow PPN and are accountable to the Carlow PPN membership. They are not representing their own organisation.

Specifically the role of the representative is to;

1. Bring issues from the body that chose them to the policy making arena.
2. Give feedback to the Carlow PPN, Sectoral Pillar/Linkage Group and/or Municipal District as appropriate on the outcomes of the policy meetings and the issues being raised.

Facilitating two-way communication in the Network

In order for the Network structure to meet its objectives, it is required that the representatives from the Carlow PPN actively seek and give feedback from its membership. It is therefore critical that appropriate dialogue structures are developed to facilitate this engagement, keep its membership up to date on work being progressed and gather information in relation to issues of concern by its broader membership. Therefore the following will apply:

1. Feedback forms/mechanisms are agreed by the Secretariat and must be completed by all representatives
2. Members representing the Carlow PPN will complete a report of each meeting for circulation to their Linkage Group and Community Development Worker

3. Web/social media mechanisms are to be developed to communicate with the wider PPN. This will include putting Agendas and agreed meeting notes up on the web for all structures and sub structures of the PPN.
4. Newsletters/Bulletins will focus on feeding back and seeking feedback from / to the membership of the PPN
5. Specific consultation workshops will be held for particularly significant plans/policies. These will be organised by the PPN in order to gather the ideas/suggestions of the wider environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sectors.
6. Updates on all aspects of the work will be provided at Secretariat meetings
7. Opportunities for Carlow PPN members to feed into plans/policies that are relevant to them will be highlighted.

Interaction of the Network with the Local Authority on Local Authority led Committees

The expectation of the Local Authority from the PPN representatives is that they will bring the knowledge and expertise of their sector with them and ensure that any policy developed has taken into consideration their needs. It is expected that this should foster a higher degree of community relevance and local participation. The Local Authority will have a duty of care to ensure that the PPN is supported so that it can achieve its objective/purpose.

The expectation of the Carlow PPN representatives from the Local Authority is that Local Authority will recognise their rights and responsibilities in these areas. They will ensure that engagement with the public really is participative. For appropriate participation of the public, user-friendly, easily accessible structures, processes and language are required. All sectoral abbreviations should be accompanied with a legend, e.g. Carlow PPN = Carlow Public Participation Network.

Implementation of Support Measures for SPC Representatives

Support Measures

Each sector should use the Carlow PPN for a structured feedback process between sectoral representatives and their nominating sectors.

Availability of Information

Where relevant and to ensure transparency, appropriate information should be made publicly available. This includes making available minutes and reports processed by the SPC's and the LCDC. In instances where documentation is of a confidential nature, this should be specifically identified as such. Any documentation not so identified will be regarded as available to the public in general and the sectors in particular.

Standing orders and the regulating of meetings

Standing orders will be adopted by the Council and the Carlow Local Community Development Committee in respect of SPC's and LCDC's following recommendation from each SPC and efforts should be made to reflect the various perspectives represented on the SPCs and the nature of the business. The standing orders should include provision for:

- The times, days and locations of meetings;
- The minimum terms of notice for meetings;
- The ordering of the Agenda;
- The provision to suspend standing orders;
- The right to speak and equality in making views known;
- The process associated with handling confidential material;
- The procedures for identification of conflicts of interests and abstention from discussions and voting;
- Provision for procedures to allow for review of previous committee business and recommendations.

Training Provision

Training will be provided by the Carlow County Council and Carlow Local Community Development Committee in respect of members of SPC's and LCDC's.

This should include -

- Workshops on policy to cover the various areas within the remit of the SPCs;
- Briefings on the reform of local government;
- Briefings on the role and functions of local government;
- Skills orientated training such as team building.

Conclusion

The above Representatives Charter will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly by Carlow PPN on foot of these reviews.