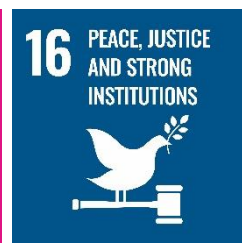




**Election Policy**

**Process and Procedures**

Reference	Approved	Ratified	For Review	Amended
Ref:0001	March 24 <sup>th</sup> 2023	1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2023	March 2024	N/A
	<b>Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 2024</b>		<b>Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 2026</b>	<b>Yes</b>



## **Introduction**

The Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in 2014 as the representative voice for all Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups. The PPN is the main link through which the Local Authority and other decision-making bodies connect with the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors. The PPN 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.

Membership of the PPN is open to all community and voluntary groups, clubs, and organisations, working on a voluntary, co-operative, or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community. The PPN is overseen by a Secretariat, elected by full member groups of the network. The PPN is committed to working in an open, inclusive and transparent manner on behalf of all member groups.

## **Objective of this Policy**

Members of Kildare Public Participation Network (Kildare PPN) elect representatives to committees and organisations to speak on behalf of all member groups of the network. Kildare PPN has 22 Representative seats and 11 Secretariat seats. This policy document sets out the process that guides those elections in Kildare. This policy is drafted to work hand-in-hand with the PPN Handbook, the Constitution of Kildare PPN and any other appropriate policies.

### **Please Note**

In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN Representatives cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining a Representative of the PPN. Once a Representative decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position immediately before putting their name forward for nomination.

- If a Representative is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to Government office, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful before seeking election as a PPN Representative.
- Should the Representative be nominated for election, but be unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date of the election before seeking election to any PPN Representative role.
- Should the Representative have been successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before seeking election to a PPN Representative role.

## **1. Pre-Election**

When a Local Authority, or other agency, Board or Committee looks for a PPN Representative, they provide the PPN Secretariat with the following details:

- Title of Board or Committee
- Function and scope of the Board or Committee
- The existing Board or Committee members
- The commitment expected from a PPN Representative (e.g. time and location of meetings, participation in subgroups etc.)

- The knowledge, skills, interests they would like the Representative to have.
- What expenses are payable.
- Any restrictions on membership of the Board or Committee e.g. not being an employee or member of an organisation funded directly by the Board or Committee.
- Any potential conflict of interest which could impact on a Representative's full participation on the Board or Committee.
- Any other relevant matters.

### **Who is not eligible**

- Elected representatives of Local Authorities cannot be nominated through this process.
- A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local, national or European) should not be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Kildare PPN staff**

- Kildare PPN staff are responsible for administering the election process.
- The Coordinator and Support Worker plays an important role in the nomination and election processes for the Secretariat and Representative roles. They organise the nomination processes, make sure the information is sent to the Member Groups in enough time to make their nomination, confirm the nominations with the nominating organisations, organise the ballot if an election is required and announce the results. They communicate at all stages in the process to the Secretariat and the Member Groups.

### **2.2 Kildare PPN Secretariat**

- The Secretariat are responsible for overseeing elections.
- The Secretariat must make sure that nominations and elections for positions on Boards and Committees are carried out in a timely manner and follow the processes established by the PPN.
- For each round of elections, Kildare PPN will nominate an Election Advisory Committee of 3 Secretariat members to oversee those elections.
- Any Secretariat member who has a conflict of interest in an upcoming election (e.g. they have a personal connection with someone who might be coming forward for election) will excuse themselves from sitting on that Election Advisory Committee.

### **2.3 Independent Observer**

For each election an independent observer will be appointed to verify the results. This will be a person from outside of the PPN but who is familiar with the workings of the organisation. In the past, for example, a representative of CKLP has performed this function.

### **3. The Structure of Kildare PPN Seats for Election**

#### **3.1 Secretariat Elections**

- There are 11 seats on the Kildare PPN Secretariat
- Nominations for vacant positions on the Secretariat, will be sought from full Kildare PPN member organisations from the appropriate college or MD, as follows:
  - 5 seats represent each of the municipal districts (MD) in Kildare; Clane-Maynooth, Newbridge-Kildare, Naas, Athy and Leixlip-Celbridge.
  - 6 seats represent the three electoral colleges (i.e. 2 each): Community and Voluntary; Environmental and Social Inclusion.
- Election is for a maximum term of five years. The Plenary may decide on a shorter term.
- Kildare PPN will strive to achieve a gender balance on the Secretariat.
- To help prevent loss of all experience from the group at one time, elections to the Secretariat must be staggered in line with Section 6 of the PPN Handbook.
- Members of the Secretariat who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms.
- The PPNs must separate the election cycle for the Secretariat from the local election cycle for Councillors, to ensure that an experienced Secretariat is in place when there is a need to elect new representatives to Local Authority Boards and Committees.
- Should a member of the Secretariat be required to resign, or otherwise be unable to continue in their role, full member groups of the relevant Municipal District or College will be contacted seeking nominations for a new Secretariat member.

#### **3.2 Representative Elections**

- There are representative seats in Kildare PPN. The criteria for and responsibilities of representatives of Kildare PPN are set out in the representative's charter.
- Nominations for vacant positions on boards and committees, on which Kildare PPN is represented, will be sought from full Kildare PPN member organisations from the appropriate college or MD.
- Employees or professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated.
- Election is for a maximum term of 5 years. The Plenary may decide to amend this term.
- Representatives of Kildare PPN who are standing down are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same role.
- Members of the Secretariat of Kildare PPN may also be elected to a representative role.
- Where an individual has been nominated for, and elected to, more than one representative seat, they must choose their preferred Board or Committee. The seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.
- Where they prefer to continue in their current Representative role, the seat on the Board or Committee not chosen, will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or readvertised for election by the PPN.

- Where they want to take up the role on the new Board or Committee, they must resign from their current Representative role. The vacancy on that Board or Committee will then be advertised and filled by the PPN in the usual way.
- Only in exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Plenary, and on a temporary or interim basis, would an individual be allowed to sit on more than one Board or Committee.

#### **4. The Nomination Process**

- All appropriate member groups will be notified of vacant seats through email, social media channels, website and any other appropriate channels.
- An invitation to nominate an individual for an open seat will be open for a period of two weeks.
- Only one nomination per full member organisation will be accepted and must be approved by an officer of that organisation.
- An individual coming forward for election must be nominated by an organisation from the appropriate college or municipal district, that has been a full member of the PPN for more than 6 months. The individual nominated must be a member in good standing of the nominating body.
- A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local, national or European) cannot be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.
- All nominations will be confirmed and verified by the Kildare PPN staff and Secretariat Advisory Committee.
- Candidates are requested to submit a photo and a short profile to accompany their nomination form. The profile should be no more than 150 words, showing relevant experience and written in the first person.
- These photos and profiles will be made public for the purpose of elections.
- The names of candidates and their nominating organisations will also be made public for elections.
- If seats are contested, voting will take place and voting will be open for a further week.
- The full Secretariat will be informed of successful candidates before results are made public.
- Candidates will be informed of the full outcome of elections before results are made public.

#### **5. The Election Process**

- Kildare PPN carries out elections online, to enable maximum participation from as many member groups as possible.
- Election Buddy (<https://electionbuddy.com/>) is the tool used to manage Kildare PPN elections.
- A link will be sent to the primary contact of each eligible organisation via e-mail to allow them to vote.
- Each eligible organisation has one vote.
- Unless specified otherwise, the voting period will last one week from when the ballots are sent out by email.
- Once the deadline for votes is reached, the voting survey will be closed and only votes received during the voting period will be valid and counted.

- Once the voting is complete, the independent observer, appointed by the Secretariat verifies and signs off on the process and results.
- In the instance of a tied vote, the Secretariat have the deciding vote, based on the profile submitted of the candidates. A meeting of the Secretariat will be convened within 7 days to finalise this decision. If a conflict of interest exists with any members of the Secretariat, they will be asked to abstain from voting.
- If no nominations are received for any specific seat or seats, these seats will be offered to non-successful nominees in the first instance before undertaking a fresh election.
- A person who places second in a contested election, will be contacted in writing and asked if they wish to stay on a panel for a period of 12 months. Should the person who won the seat, for some reason be unable to complete their term, the panel member will be asked if they wish to take up that seat.

## **6. Post Election Process**

### **6.1 Ratification**

- Once an individual is deemed to have 'won' a representative seat, the full Secretariat and the candidate is informed by the Coordinator.
- A letter is issued by the PPN Coordinator to inform KCC Corporate Services (administrators), of the name and bio of the person appointed by the PPN to the relevant Committee.
- Corporate Services send this information to Corporate Policy Group for approval.
- Once approved by the full Council, the elected rep may take up their seat on the relevant committee.
- Representatives of Kildare PPN must also be ratified at the next Plenary.
- Once an individual is deemed to have 'won' a Secretariat seat, the full Secretariat and the candidate is informed by the Coordinator.
- Secretariat members of Kildare PPN must be ratified at the next Plenary.

### **6.2 Appeals and disputes**

- In the event of any dispute or conflict arising during the nomination or election process the PPN Coordinator, with the support of the election advisory group, will in the first case seek to resolve it informally.
- If this is not successful the complainant will be asked to detail their concerns in writing to the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat will appoint at least two members, one of whom will be from the same pillar group as the complainant, to meet with the complainant and address their concerns. This sub-group will report back to the full Secretariat on how the conflict can be resolved.
- The outcome of any appeal will be issued in writing to the complainant within 21 days of receiving the initial complaint.
- The decision of the Secretariat after this process is final.

### **6.3 Seats vacant for an extended period**

- Every effort must be made to ensure open, transparent, democratic elections to secure representatives on SPC's and members for the Secretariat.
- In limited circumstances, in the event of a seat remaining vacant for more than 6 months and failing to attract nominations during routine elections, the Secretariat may consider co-opting a member from the appropriate pillar or MD to sit in that seat on an interim basis.
- Such co-option must be ratified at the next Plenary and the co-opted seat must be put up for election again at the earliest possible opportunity.

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

For Kildare PPN, openness, transparency and democratic processes are core values. During the course of our work Kildare PPN, Representatives, Secretariat members, and staff may at times become privy to information that is confidential to the organisations they represent, or even personal in nature to the individuals engaged with Kildare PPN. In such instances, all parties are required and expected to treat that information with the utmost respect, consideration and confidentiality. Breaches in confidentiality, will be treated with seriousness and may be subject to complaint or grievance in line with the Kildare PPN Grievance Policy.

## **8. Resources**

[Link to PPN Handbook](#)

[Link to Representatives Charter](#)

[Link to Kildare PPN Constitution](#)

[Link to Election Buddy](#)