

Report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government

December 2013



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Terms of Reference of Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government

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Main Aims

To make recommendations that provide for:

- More extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision-making process at local government level
- Facilitation of input by citizens into decision making at local government level.

The Working Group will consider four main areas of work:

1. Definitions and Guiding Principles:

- Present clear definitions of citizen engagement, using national and international expertise and best practice;
- Agree a number of clear guiding principles to inform enhanced citizen engagement: and
- Outline the potential for increased participation and shared responsibility that would accompany increased citizen engagement.

2. Review:

- Review the relevant recommendations on citizen engagement from the report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007).

3. Access and Support Infrastructure:

- Recommend a participatory mechanism for citizens in the new Local Government structures, that will ensure citizen input into decision making, clear and transparent structures for the selection of representatives and accountability of representatives to their wider communities and groups.
- Set out the resources, tools and mechanisms to enable this infrastructure to be established and develop; this should include details on: the agreement required, the voting structures to be used and other relevant issues identified by the group.

In this context identify the resource requirements to support communities of interest to actively participate.

- Outline a comprehensive capacity building programme for citizen engagement to include possible joint arrangements between citizens and relevant stakeholders.
- Consider further the application and implementation of options in Putting People First including:
“Participatory Budgeting; Petition Rights; Plebiscites; Town or Area meetings.”
- Devise and outline mechanisms to ensure the engagement of the most

disadvantaged.

- Identify ways to strengthen and enhance local authority relationships with local groups.
- Propose ways of addressing barriers to participation.
- Outline the role of technology, and in particular social media, in citizen engagement.
- Actively inform the guidance to be prepared by DECLG for local authorities on proposed approaches to citizen engagement. In this context provide guidance on how the Local Government Reform legislation could provide for local authorities to draft Citizens Charters to outline how they will facilitate better engagement with their citizens.

4. Feedback mechanisms:

- Propose a spectrum for on-going feedback on citizen engagement.
- Outline ways to measure and evaluate citizen feedback.
- To ensure accountability of representatives to their wider communities and groups, propose a mechanism for monitoring and supporting citizen participation in local government. This mechanism should have the capacity to facilitate citizen feedback, development of best practice models, attendance and performance monitoring, and other issues the Committee may consider relevant in this context.

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Report of the working group on citizen engagement with local government

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Introduction

The objective of this report is to provide structures and guidance that will assist local authorities, through extensive and diverse consultation processes with the public and communities and input processes based on these consultations in creating communities where individual members of the public and their families, friends and neighbours, promote and protect the well-being of this and future generations. All stakeholders share a responsibility to work together to assist local government fulfil its functions in this regard.

‘Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government’ identifies the need for Local Government to build strong relationships with and gain the interest of local people and to provide for better engagement with citizens.

The participation of citizens in public life and their right to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities are at the centre of democracy. Open and inclusive policy-making increases public participation, enhances transparency and accountability, builds civic capacity and leads to increased buy-in and better decision-making.

It is important that open and participatory systems are developed through an open and participatory engagement with interested parties. To this end all moves towards making decision-making more participative are useful and welcome. It is important to ensure that local people and other stakeholders are genuinely engaged in shaping the decisions that affect them. The proposals contained in this report are simply a step towards that goal. Whatever structures and processes are finally put in place should be monitored on an on-going basis and reviewed annually to identify how they might be improved in light of experience. This report proposes a structure for this purpose.

As part of a revitalisation of local government, the approaches to engage citizens in local authority policy formulation and service design must go beyond the range of

communication, consultation and citizen participation mechanisms used in the past. The work of local authorities heretofore has involved extensive interaction with communities, including attendance by the public and media at local authority meetings, provision of information on local authority activities, budgets, etc; public consultation on specific matters such as bye-laws and development plans; local authority participation in local development and community bodies; powers under the 2001 Local Government Act to enhance engagement with the local community by consulting with local groups, information meetings, ascertaining the views of the local community on matters that affect them, and carrying out research or surveys in the community.

Local authorities are extensively engaged in a variety of statutory consultation procedures, and it will be important to recognise that the public participation processes put in place on foot of this Report are to be complementary to the statutory consultation processes. Actions within the public participation processes cannot be allowed to substitute for any statutory requirements, and conversely, failure to use the process in any particular case, or inadequacy in how it is operated, cannot be interpreted to prejudice any statutory requirements.

'Better Local Government' sought to increase the involvement of local people through the SPC system, with not less than one-third of members drawn from various sectors. Community & Voluntary Fora were established as part of the CDB initiative in 2000 as the representative voice of community and voluntary organisations at local level, and to facilitate their involvement in local authority decision-making.

Notwithstanding these developments, it was found by the Taskforce on Active Citizenship that there was a democratic deficit at local level, due to a perceived absence of meaningful opportunities for civic participation in decision-making about local issues, and with concerns about the ability of communities to influence decisions and mechanisms to channel civic energy. Civic engagement can only be sustained if people believe that they can influence decision-making and that their views are taken into account.

Citizen participation structures that are currently in place are not reaching all sectors within communities, whether for reasons of lack of awareness, interest, commuting or working patterns, family commitments, lack of time and/or resources or otherwise. Local authorities sometimes feel that the public does not engage to

best effect with consultation on strategic policies and only engages at a very late stage when specific decisions are seen to affect the locality. On the other hand people and groups sometimes feel that the local authority does not adequately involve them in the policy-making development in which they wish to engage which can sometimes result in a lack of trust in the institutions.

These difficulties are not unique to Ireland and the Council of Europe has recognised the challenge of addressing low levels of public participation and considered and adopted a range of measures to address this issue.

The Task Force on the Public Service noted the OECD recognition of the need for greater focus by the public service on citizens and their expectations, a deepened interaction with citizens and efforts to ensure the participation of those in society whose participation is lowest.

In the new Local Government structures the municipal districts will constitute the primary representational components of the system. The Action Programme for Effective Local Government recognises the potential of various mechanisms to engage citizens and communities and encourage participative democracy. These include participatory budgeting, petition-related rights, plebiscites, and regular town/area meetings. This report does not focus on how this might be done, but recommends a methodology that should be deployed on a county/city-wide basis, or focused on municipal districts, certain areas, localities or neighbourhoods.

Capacity building will be required across all relevant sectors and will require 'buy-in' at political level, as well as across local government, communities, citizens/service users, local development and other stakeholders. Local authorities will need to support the use of participative/deliberative methods through education, training or skills development to enable community participation. The support of environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups in advancing participatory/deliberative democratic measures will be particularly important given public service resource constraints and such groups can provide institutional supports, mobilise existing networks and assist in capacity building.

The role of residents' associations, community development organisations, community councils, local development groups, Tidy Town committees, sporting clubs, parish councils and other local faith-based groupings, arts groups and similar community organisations have a distinct relevance for the community leadership

role of local government. Strengthened relationships between such community groups and local authorities would be mutually beneficial, and would benefit from an increased skills base in the area of participative, deliberative, community-based planning for sustainable development. Section 128 of the Local Government Act 2001 already allows for the recognition of local groups by a local authority to promote dialogue.

Approaches to stimulate greater citizen engagement should complement rather than diminish, compete with, or substitute for local representative democracy and the primary responsibility and accountability for decision-making within the local authority will remain with the elected council. However, these would be informed and strengthened by more effective community/citizen engagement and increased public participation in local government.

Other challenges from increased citizen engagement include –

- the need to develop appropriate skills among elected members and officials, a supportive political culture, and effective and economical means of engagement, including the use of the latest media and technology;
- the need to develop public participation skills for civil society¹.
- potentially more complex and time-consuming decision-making and feedback mechanisms;
- public participation to be balanced between different groups in society;
- adjudicating on competing opinions of citizens/groups, and between citizens/groups and elected members;
- maintaining confidence among citizens on how information generated from engagement is used, and establishing openness and accountability in the subsequent decision-making process;
- increased incidence of “consultation fatigue”.

The elected members of each local authority have a key role to play in advancing greater citizen engagement and better linkage with local communities, particularly in the context of the new municipal district system. It is essential that a careful and measured approach is taken in introducing new forms of citizen participation in

¹ Civil society includes any voluntary collective activity in which people combine to achieve change on a particular issue - but it does not include political parties, even though civil society has a political dimension. It is a public space that is neither the market nor the government.

local authorities². Consideration will also be given to possible initiatives to promote greater participation in local government by groups such as young people, women and groups whose voices have not been well heard in the past; to promote higher voter turnout at elections; and to increase understanding on the part of the public generally of local government, how it operates and what it does.

Finally, it must be recognised that a strong focus on public participation in decision-making processes at local level will require adjustments from the Local Authorities as well as from the public. Local Authorities will have to ensure that the public are aware of their right and responsibilities in these areas. They will also have to ensure that engagement with the public really is participative and not simply tokenistic. For genuine participation of the public, user-friendly and easily accessible structures and processes are required. These, too, should form part of the on-going monitoring and annual review referred to already.

1. Public Engagement and Participation

1.1. What is Public Engagement and Participation?

While the working group was tasked with examining arrangements for citizen ‘engagement’ with Local Government, participation is regarded as more inclusive and suggests a sharing of responsibility for decision-making and is used throughout the rest of this report. In addition and in accordance with best practice, public participation should not be restricted to ‘the local community’ or indeed ‘citizens’. For the purposes of this report, we use the term ‘the public’ and ‘members of the public’, which is defined as “one or more natural or legal persons, and, in accordance with national legislation or practice, their associations, organisations or groups³”. To reinforce the point, public

² The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government will prepare guidance and provide support for local authorities to apply participative methods within the provisions for the Framework for Public Participation in Local Government included as an amendment to section 127 of the Local Government Act 2001 at Seanad Committee stage of the deliberation of the Local Government Reform Bill 2013.

³ Aarhus Convention

participation should be provided for 'without discrimination as to citizenship, nationality or domicile'.⁴

Simply stated, to participate is to take part, to share and act together. The level at which a member of the public is involved varies with the relevant legislation, and with the aspirations and interests of the public. Participation is an integral part of the process of assisting the local authority lead overall community efforts to move towards an economic, environmental and socially sustainable future that delivers an improved well-being for this and future generations. Public participation in making decisions uses the knowledge, skills, experience and enthusiasm of the public to help make the decision and recognises that the public have a significant role to play. Local authorities work for the public. To do so in a way that the public want and to ensure that they know what the public needs, they must involve the public when they make decisions. Public participation can lead to better decisions – decisions that better meet the needs of more people, decisions that can be implemented more quickly, last longer and decisions that have more validity and public support.

For public participation to be effective it requires members of the public to be well informed and kept aware of the possibilities for participation and for the public to engage constructively. This requires a pro-active approach from local government. For public participation to add value to the decision-making, public participation itself must be valued by those entrusted with making the final decisions.

The level at which members of the public can participate will depend on the nature of the decision. Some of the ways in which the public can engage at these different levels is detailed in Appendix 6.

Public participation can range from involvement in local neighbourhood and community life (e.g. tidy towns, residents associations, sports clubs) to structured engagement with public authorities and associated decision-making structures (e.g. area committees, Strategic Policy Committees, community development organisations, participatory budgeting; petition rights; plebiscites; town or area meetings, including meetings of municipal districts) and everything in between, including voting.

For the purposes of this report, we understand public participation to involve structured engagement between members of the public and groups of

⁴ Aarhus Convention

members of the public and the local authority at elected and official levels, in inputting and contributing to the shaping local government policy as opposed to general community activity.

The term civil society has a range of meanings. Volunteering is often considered a defining characteristic of many of the organisations that constitute civil society, while other organisations exist to represent the interests of particular groups. Examples of civil society organisations are community development organisations, voluntary associations, trade unions etc, but it is not necessary to belong to all of these to be a part of civil society.

For public governance purposes at national and local levels, broader civic society is sometimes categorised in the context of the Business Pillar, Trade Union Pillar, Environmental Pillar, Farming Pillar, and Community/Voluntary Pillar etc. This report will deal only with members of the public involved in the environmental and community & voluntary pillars as they are the more diverse, poorly resourced and in the case of the community & voluntary sector less structured.

The objective of this report then is to facilitate public participation by setting out the type of appropriate enabling structures that should be put in place. All individuals may access local government through the existing arrangements in regard to their issues. For the purpose of this structured public participation within local government, individuals may join existing organisations and groups who share a similar interest or they can form an organisation or group about their specific interests and issues and register with the local network.

1.2. Why Public Participation?

1.2.1. Purpose of Public Participation:

Extensive and diverse input by the public into the decision-making process at local government level and the facilitation of input by the public into decision making at local government level will enable the whole community to engage in decision-making, with the objective of improving the well-being of this and future generations.

1.2.2. Why should the public engage with local government?

When people take part in making decisions that affect them and their environment, the outcomes of those decisions are more likely to provide for the well-being of this and future generations of the communities concerned⁵. If properly undertaken it means that local knowledge is part of the decision making process, and that this is weighed up with knowledge from other sources. Solutions are developed relevant to the local area, rather than being imposed by external experts.

To be part of the decision-making process increases the level of people's identification with political institutions. In fact, the other main benefit generated by the participatory/deliberative method in civil and political life is an increase in people's trust in institutions⁶. Some groups tend to be excluded from opportunities and resources available to the rest of society through poverty, inequality and discrimination. Underlying structural causes for such exclusion (e.g. long term unemployment, educational disadvantage, discrimination) must be addressed and action taken to facilitate participation despite these impediments.

In the longer term, public participation can improve democracy. Regular public participation shows people that they are valued and that their views are important. It builds trust and confidence in the local authority and demonstrates to the public that change is possible. Individuals and community groups can become more active and more responsible for their quality of life and by extension the quality of future generations. People can feel more part of a community and the local authority can foster better relationships with these communities over time. Participation can build confidence to undertake further initiatives and help give the public the skills to do so.

1.2.3. Why should Local Government engage with the public?

⁵ So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the outcome of Citizen Engagement, IDS Working Paper 347, Gaventa J, Barrett G, Oct 2010. University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.

⁶ See the appendices for several examples that assist communities to prepare their own Action Plans in a way that is inclusive, deliberative and participatory.

A key purpose of local government is to promote the well-being and quality of life of the public and communities. Given that is the case, local government needs to know what needs to be done to maximise peoples' well-being and ensure the highest possible quality of life for members of the public and their communities. To do this local government must talk with and listen to people and communities as well as implement the necessary actions.

For this to be effective, as well as using existing mechanisms more efficiently, the public and local government will have to be creative and make use of the many useful tools that are available^{7,8} in order to have constructive and inclusive conversations. Appendix 6 contains some models of approaches that may be used locally to assist in this process.

Local Government provides a broad range of services to the public in the city/county, irrespective of their age, means, culture, religion or race. It is the primary vehicle of governance and public service at local level and provides these services on an all-inclusive basis in a defined geographic area. As a result of this level of service delivery, there is a responsibility and desirability at local government level to facilitate, enable and support the public to participate in sustainable decision making processes in those service areas that concern them.

The Government's vision, which we share, is a local government system, working in partnership with people and their communities, that is the primary vehicle of governance and public service at local level, which delivers efficient and good value services to the public and which is a significant leader of sustainable economic, environmental, social and community development locally. Local government, like national government, is also tasked with particular responsibilities in relation to promoting social inclusion, gender equality and the inclusion of minorities.

Lengthy arguments after decision have been made can also be avoided since the different opinions have already been considered. The decision is more likely to be implemented effectively and efficiently if the decision-making

⁷ Cf. The Community Planning Handbook. Wates, Nick (ed) 2000. Earthscan Publications, London.

⁸ The Community Planning Event Manual – How to use Collaborative and Urban Design events to Improve your Environment. Nick Wates, 2008, Earthscan Publications, London

process is more open, more honest and more accountable. Public participation does not guarantee that everyone will be happy with a decision since different groups of people will have different priorities and concerns. But involving the public at an early stage in the process and finding ways for their views to be heard and taken into account, helps to build consensus. In addition, by being involved in the process, the public is exposed to the whole range of factors which may influence a decision. Even if people do not agree with a decision, they are more likely to understand why it was made.

The local authority has a responsibility for the preparation and implementation of policy in a holistic manner, respecting local community and citizen concerns and interests to the greatest extent possible, but it must avoid a piecemeal and disjointed outcome to participatory, consultation and policy formulation processes. It has a responsibility for the sustainable development of the local authority area, balancing the more local and community interests with the wider interests of the whole of its area, within national and regional policy parameters. Accordingly, the public in participation processes must recognise that the local authority operates within a wider context which takes into account the overall common good.

1.3. Who?

Members of the public may be involved as individuals or as members of organisations. They may become involved due to their proximity, engagement in economic, social or environmental issues, values, etc. By contrast, stakeholders, of which the public is one, are literally those with a stake in an issue and may include non-governmental organisations (NGO's), government or its agents, industry, individuals, communities etc.

1.4. Guiding Principles

The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary sector (Executive Summary, see appendix 3), published in

September 2000, sets out organising principles which underpin the type of framework for active citizenship and engagement with the institutions of state and these are presented here:

Active Citizenship

Active citizenship refers to the active role of people, communities and voluntary organisations in decision-making which directly affects them. This extends the concept of formal citizenship and democratic society from one of basic civil, political and social, environmental and economic rights⁹ to one of direct democratic participation and responsibility.

Resource Allocation and Promotion of Equality of Opportunity

Some groups tend to be excluded from opportunities and resources available to the rest of society. Underlying structural causes for such exclusion (e.g. long-term unemployment, educational disadvantage) must be addressed.

Helping people to participate in issues which affect them

There is a need to develop positive action programmes to target groups which are most marginalised and to support them to become involved in issues and concerns affecting themselves and their communities.

Respect for individual freedom in the pursuit of social goals

It is important to foster a culture and society which respects the autonomy of the individual. This means creating a climate which supports individuals and groups to make things happen rather than have things happen to them.

Promoting and Strengthening Social Dialogue

Individuals and communities must be facilitated to speak about the problems affecting them and be part of the practical response. The promotion and strengthening of social dialogue across society involves the State developing partnerships with a wide range of bodies and organisations, including not only Community and Voluntary and environmental interests, but also employer representatives, trade unions and farming organisations.

⁹ This listing is in line with the Aarhus Convention and Our Sustainable Future.

The Council of Europe's 'Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process', adopted in October 2009 (to which Ireland is a subscriber) sets out a general framework for civil participation based on the following principles:

Participation

Organisations collect and channel views of their members, user groups and concerned citizens. This input provides crucial value to the political decision-making process, enhancing the quality, understanding and longer term applicability of the policy initiative. A pre-condition for this principle is that the processes for participation are open and accessible, based on agreed parameters for participation.

Trust

An open and democratic society is based on honest interaction between actors and sectors. Although organisations and public authorities have different roles to play, the shared goal of improving the lives of people can only be satisfactorily reached if based on trust, implying transparency, respect and mutual reliability.

Accountability and transparency

Acting in the public interest requires openness, responsibility, clarity and accountability from both the organisations and public authorities, with transparency at all stages.

Independence

Organisations must be recognised as free and independent bodies in respect to their aims, decisions and activities. They have the right to act independently and advocate positions different from the authorities with whom they may otherwise cooperate.

We propose that these principles be at the core of all governance participation processes. We also propose that the following be the fundamentals of public participation processes at all levels of governance:

1. The public participation process is to be complementary to the various statutory consultation processes, and action within the process will not substitute for any statutory requirements, and failure to use the process, either adequately or at all, will not prejudice any statutory requirements.

2. The public participation process seeks out and facilitates the participation of those potentially affected by its decisions.
3. The participation process respects both the public's need for time to consider their input to decisions, and the local authority's need for timely decision making.
4. Members of the public must be involved in deciding how they will participate
5. Multiple methods of participation should be made available and the appropriate methodology must be deployed for different situations and different
6. Methods for participation must be user-friendly and perceived as fair, just and respectful
7. The venues for public participation must be accessible to all
8. The public participation process provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful and accessible manner.
9. The public's role in decision-making and the limits of their influence is clear from the outset.
10. It should be demonstrated that the public's contribution has the potential to meaningfully influence the decisions or outcomes
11. The public participation process communicates to the public how their input affected the decision or outcomes once the decisions are made.
12. The public has the opportunity to be involved and/or monitor the implementation of the decision or outcomes.

2. Public Engagement and Participation with Local Government

2.1. What is happening currently?

Local government's traditional role in providing local infrastructure (housing, roads and water), emergency management, planning and environmental services is well understood. The conventional narrative on Irish local government, however, emphasises its weakness and narrow functional role relative to European counterparts. However, notwithstanding Irish local government's narrow formal remit, it has a central role in land use policies, which underpin all development in a local area. It also has broad powers to influence community, enterprise and employment activities to the benefit of

local people. Section 66.3¹⁰ of the Local Government Act 2001 copper-fastened local government's "general competence" role to promote local areas:

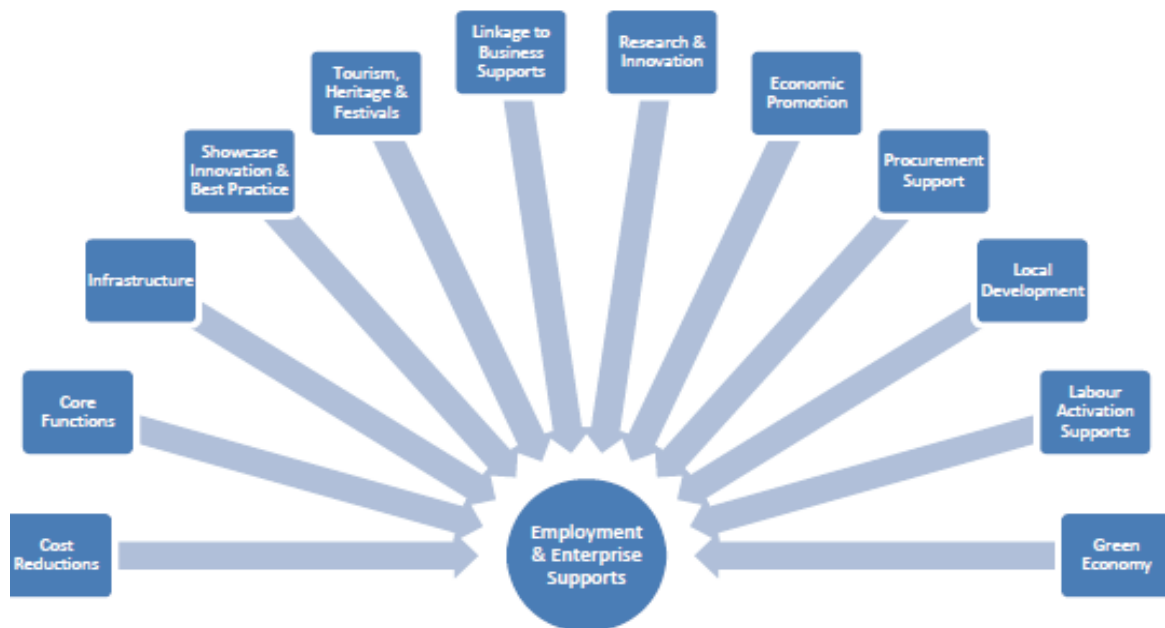
"A local authority may take such measures, engage in such activities or do such things in accordance with the law (including the incurring of expenditure) as it considers necessary or desirable to promote the interests of the local community" (Callanan and Keogan, p. 9).

On this basis, local authorities are involved in the management, delivery and administration of a wide range of initiatives and projects as lead and project partner, and across a range of economic, social, environmental and cultural sectors. These include tourism, culture, heritage, enterprise, research and planning, urban and village renewal, renewable energy and enterprise projects.

One example to illustrate the span of activity in this space can be seen in Figure 1 below, in which data from 2011 and 2012 was used to map Irish local authority supports for enterprise and employment.

¹⁰ Section 66(3) is being amended in the Local Government Reform Bill 2013 to add 'enterprise and economic development' to the range of activities a local authority is currently allowed to perform in accordance with the provisions of section 66, making the promotion of economic development and enterprise support more central to the local authority role.

Graph 1: Local Government Employment and Enterprise Supports



Therefore, local government's role in the area of community and enterprise, in particular, has evolved well beyond that of a service provider to an enabler of local community and economic development and will evolve considerably further in the light of the provisions of the Local Government Reform Bill 2013, including the provisions in relation to Local Economic and Community Plans.

Local government plays a key enabling role in areas ranging from tourism, heritage, culture, labour activation, environmental protection and enhancement, business development and innovation activities, all of which benefit the local community. This broader role entails strong involvement in promoting public engagement and participation.

2.2. Current models of engagement by Local Authorities

The examples below are separate from the extensive statutory consultations engaged in by all local authorities under various enactments see appendix 6 for further examples of both statutory and non-statutory engagement.

Traditional methods of local authority engagement with communities such as extensive mail-drops to houses are being supplemented in the new local government structures by more innovative and targeted communications and consultations. Some interesting examples of best practice on public engagement have emerged, driven by new tools and practices.¹¹ Most local authorities are intensifying their use of social media and adopting improved marketing techniques to help communicate specific messages to the public, and to offer a richer, more interactive experience for the public.¹² Some local authorities are experimenting with new forms of public participation to help design urban areas in line with user experience. For example, Dublin City Council uses the “Your City, Your Voice”¹³ panel to monitor public opinion on local services and policy. The Mayo County Community Forum, in conjunction with Mayo County Council, has developed the Community Futures programme to enable local communities to prepare their own Action Plans in a way that is inclusive and participatory¹⁴.

Ireland is also known for our wide range of initiatives and structures to give a particular voice to groups and individuals who are marginalised from decision-making structures through poverty, social exclusion and/or discrimination in society. These include a wide range of commitments under Irish and EU legislation and guidelines to include the voice of excluded and marginalised in decisions that affect their lives and to promote gender equality in decision-making. The processes outlined here are designed to strengthen and supplement, not replace these processes.

¹¹ A simple and effective example of this is: <http://www.fixyourstreet.ie/>

¹² For example, Carlow County Council and other local authorities use www.mapalserter.com and other text services to provide targeted communications to local authorities about traffic / event management and other local issues.

¹³ http://www.dublincity.ie/Press/dccPressPacks/YDYV/Documents/YourDublinYourVoice_TopLineResults%20April%202011.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.mayocdb.ie/Home/MayoCommunityForum/CommunityFutures/>

2.3. Role of Local Government and Public Participation

Increased participation by the public in local decision-making is a pre-requisite for improving local democracy. However, it is important to note that the focus of local government is and always has been on members of the public. Local authorities have a long and proud history of involvement in community engagement initiatives at local level. This role has been growing since the 1980's, with a focus on local development initiatives to create employment, and local co-ordination of services.

The State recognises local government's role as the key democratic institution at local level in providing a forum for democratic representation of local communities, and in promoting their interests. Elected members use their democratic mandate to bring the voice of their local community to the table. This is an important feature of modern representative democracy.

There is a range of participative structures and processes to improve local democracy and participation in decision-making. The ethos of local government is very much centred on working "for the people with the people", with the person placed at the heart of and part of everything that they do. The reform agenda under "Putting People First" includes proposals for a significantly increased role for local government community development programmes, where that sector would be aligned with the local government system.

Working with the public and local communities, elected members are also involved in the Council, Strategic Policy Committees, Area Committees, Joint Policing Committees and various other local structures.

2.4. How to strengthen Public Participation of organised civil society with Local Government

This section outlines the ways in which structures and processes for securing the engagement of organised civil society with local government can be strengthened.

We focus in particular on structures to strengthen the participation of members of the public in promoting the well-being of the municipal district and city/county for this and future generations through public benefit civil society groupings in the following three categories:

- Social inclusion organisations which represent the interests of groups affected by poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. This includes local communities in disadvantaged areas, groups suffering discrimination and/or social exclusion as a result of race, creed, ability, gender etc. such as Travellers etc.
- Environmental organisations whose primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability.
- Other voluntary and community organisations, including area-based organisations.

2.5. Framework for Public Engagement and Participation

It is proposed that a new framework for public engagement and participation, to be called “The Public Participation Network (PPN)” will be developed within each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County/City level) 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 including those outlined in appendix 2 below.

The PPN will be the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes.

The aim of the structures and processes described below is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, not to reduce or homogenise this diversity. A parallel and equally important aim should be to facilitate the local authority in making better and more timely decisions. To allow the diversity of voices and interests to be facilitated and involved in decision-making, a network that meets the criteria outlined throughout this report should be set up in each county/city and municipal district.

Members of the local community interact with local government at different levels. The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a

structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government.

As noted already in this report all individuals may access local government through the existing arrangements in regard to their issues. For the purpose of this structured public participation within local government, individuals may join an existing group or organisation or they can establish an interest group or organisation and register it with the PPN.

The Network is expected to perform its functions following core principles to facilitate active participation with decision making bodies as identified earlier i.e. participation trust, accountability, transparency and independence. The Network:

- Facilitates the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies
- Strengthens the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate
- Provides information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

In particular the role of the Network is:

1. To contribute to the local authority's development for the County/City a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.
2. to facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.
3. to identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.
4. to actively support 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.
5. to encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services.
6. to facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors onto city/county decision making bodies.

7. to support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network
8. to work to develop the Environmental, Community and Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the County/City.
9. to support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that:
 - They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively.
 - They can participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities.
 - They are included and their voices and concerns are heard.

2.6. Key Principles of Working

The Public Participation Network will

- Implement and abide by good governance structures. One way of doing this would be by adopting the 'Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations'.
- Work in an inclusive, respectful, transparent and collaborative manner.
- Act as the vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies and plans being developed by local authorities, reflecting both areas of disagreement and, where there is no consensus, the range of views.

The Public Participation Networks must operate in a manner that recognises that the sectors are broad and made up of people with many different opinions. It is not expected that the Public Participation Networks will come up with a 'one voice response' but that it will feed back the issues and suggestions raised by a broad range of environmental, community and & voluntary groups. It is recognised that where contradictory responses are presented to the local authority, the ultimate responsibility for resolving these in the finalisation of policies will rest with the elected members.

3. Public Participation Network (PPN) Structures

3.1. Outline of structure

As stated already, it is proposed that a new framework for public engagement and participation, to be called "The Public Participation Network (PPN)" will be

developed within each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County/City level) 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 including those outlined in appendix 2 below.

The Public Participation Network (PPN) will be organised:

- At County/City level
- At Municipal District level

Each PPN will have:

- A County/City Plenary at County/City level which deals with county/city level issues
- A Municipal District Plenary in each Municipal District which deals with issues at a municipal level
- Linkage Groups which deal with specific issues
- A secretariat at county/City level that is a facilitation and communication mechanism.

We now provide details on these structures.

3.2. Municipal District PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK (PPN)

In the new Local Government legislation each county is divided into Municipal Districts.

Each Municipal District will have a Public Participation Network (PPN). This is made up of community, voluntary and environmental organisations within the Municipal District. These organisations work together on agreed objectives based on promoting the well-being of this and future generations. Where the local authority would find operation of the Network as sub-Municipal District level advantageous, this can be provided for.

The Municipal District PPN has the freedom to engage as it sees fit in whatever way it wishes to promote local development and in this way it can harness local capacity and strengthen local development in a very real manner.

3.2.1. Municipal District Plenary

The Plenary is the ruling body of the Municipal District PPN and is made up of all registered community, environmental and voluntary organisations in the District.

Each Member Organisation will have one vote. They may select two people to represent them on Plenary of the Municipal District PPN. One of these people will be the main *Representative* and the other the *Alternate*.

The plenary of each Municipal District PPN will meet formally at least twice a year. The initial meeting in year one will be convened by the County/City Council after which the Municipal District PPN makes its own arrangements.

Each Municipal District PPN will commence its work by going through a process to set out what it considers necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations.

The PPN in each Municipal District has the freedom to engage as it sees fit in whatever way it wishes to promote local development and in this way it can harness local capacity and strengthen local development in a very real manner.

The Plenary of each Municipal District PPN nominates one person to the Secretariat for the County/City PPN.

Member organisations of the Municipal District PPN may also be members of the City/County PPN.

In order for the Network to work effectively, it is recommended that there is one County Register for all environmental, voluntary and social inclusion groups, a copy of which will be maintained by the local authority in accordance with Section 128 of the Local Government Act 2001.

All groups must be registered by an agreed date in any given year, in order to have voting rights in the following year.

Network registration forms should be completed annually by organisations in the Public Participation Networks (PPN).

3.3. County/City PPN:

All registered organisations in the County/City are members of the County/City PPN. They work together on agreed objectives based on promoting the well-being of this and future generations in this area.

The PPN will be the main channel through which people will be selected to participate in various processes of the County/City Councils and their Boards/Committees.

Participants will be chosen by the PPN and should not be rejected by the County Council or any of its structures.

Likewise, the Council or its structures should not bypass the PPN in choosing representatives from the social inclusion, environmental or voluntary sectors to sit on any of its Boards/Committees.

3.3.1. County/City Plenary

At a county level the Plenary is the ruling body of the PPN

Member organisations are represented on the Plenary of the County/City PPN.

The County/City PPN Plenary will meet formally at least twice a year. The first meeting in year 1 will be organised by the Local Authority after which the County/City PPN Plenary will make its own arrangements.

Each Member Organisation will have one vote. They may select two people to represent them on the Plenary. One of these people will be the main *Representative* and the other the *Alternate*.

A Plenary Meeting shall be deemed a valid meeting if at least 15% of the Member Organisations are represented and also only if at least 4 of those present are members of the Secretariat (cf details below). There must also be an automatic and guaranteed 21 days' notice of the meeting.

Each County/City PPN will commence its work by going through a process to set out what it considers necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations.

3.4. Secretariat

Each City/County PPN will have a Secretariat whose role is to

- Facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary,
- Ensure the proper functioning of the PPN in between Plenaries.
- Coordinate activities of PPN
- Communicate extensively and regularly with all PPN members and in this process disseminate information concerning all PPN activities as widely as possible.
- Manage the resource worker who will be provided to PPN at a county level to enable them in delivering their objectives.

The Secretariat will meet at least four times a year.

The Secretariat will be made up of:

- one representative nominated from each of the Municipal District PPNs
- An equal number of representatives from each of the electoral colleges of the PPN, i.e. Community, Social Inclusion, and Environment. The minimum should be two from each (cf below).

The Secretariat should be provided with an office and will have a resource worker. There should be provision for agenda-setting, including of matters of importance to the local authority.

3.5. Representative Role on Local and County Decision making Bodies

Examples of decision-making bodies in the context of the Local Authority are set out in appendix 2 below.

Representatives of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors who participate in local and County Decision Making Bodies should be selected through the Network structure.

3.6. Linkage Groups

The Linkage Group mechanism is central to ensuring that:

- All member organisations are enabled to participate in shaping the decisions that affect them that are being developed by any structure of the County/City Council.
- All member organisations play a direct role in choosing their participants in County/City Council structures addressing particular issues.
- The views of all those involved will be communicated within the relevant County/City structure.
- All member organisations will be fully up to date with developments in all of these County/City structures.

This is how the Linkage Groups work.

1. When the County/City Council has public participant seats to fill on any of its committees/structures it will notify the PPN Secretariat and ask that the representatives to fill these seats be chosen by the PPN.
2. The Secretariat will then
 - Notify ALL member organisations in the County/City of this situation, and
 - Arrange a time and place for a meeting of **all those organisations with an interest/involvement in the issue(s) being addressed by the particular body or, in the case of places representing particular interests of communities, those organisations which fit the relevant criteria.**

This group will constitute a PPN 'Linkage Group' for this particular body and the topic(s) being addressed.

- The Linkage Group will choose their representative(s) for the body.

- The person(s) chosen to represent the PPN in such bodies will meet their Linkage Group regularly.
- The Linkage Group should operate as their reference group on the issues arising.
- They will report back to the Linkage Group after every meeting.
- They will take direction from the Linkage Group on the positions they are to take on particular issues.

Each representative taking up such a position for the PPN must

- Represent the views of all the members of the Linkage Group and not just those of their own organisation.
- Abide by the communications protocols set out above.

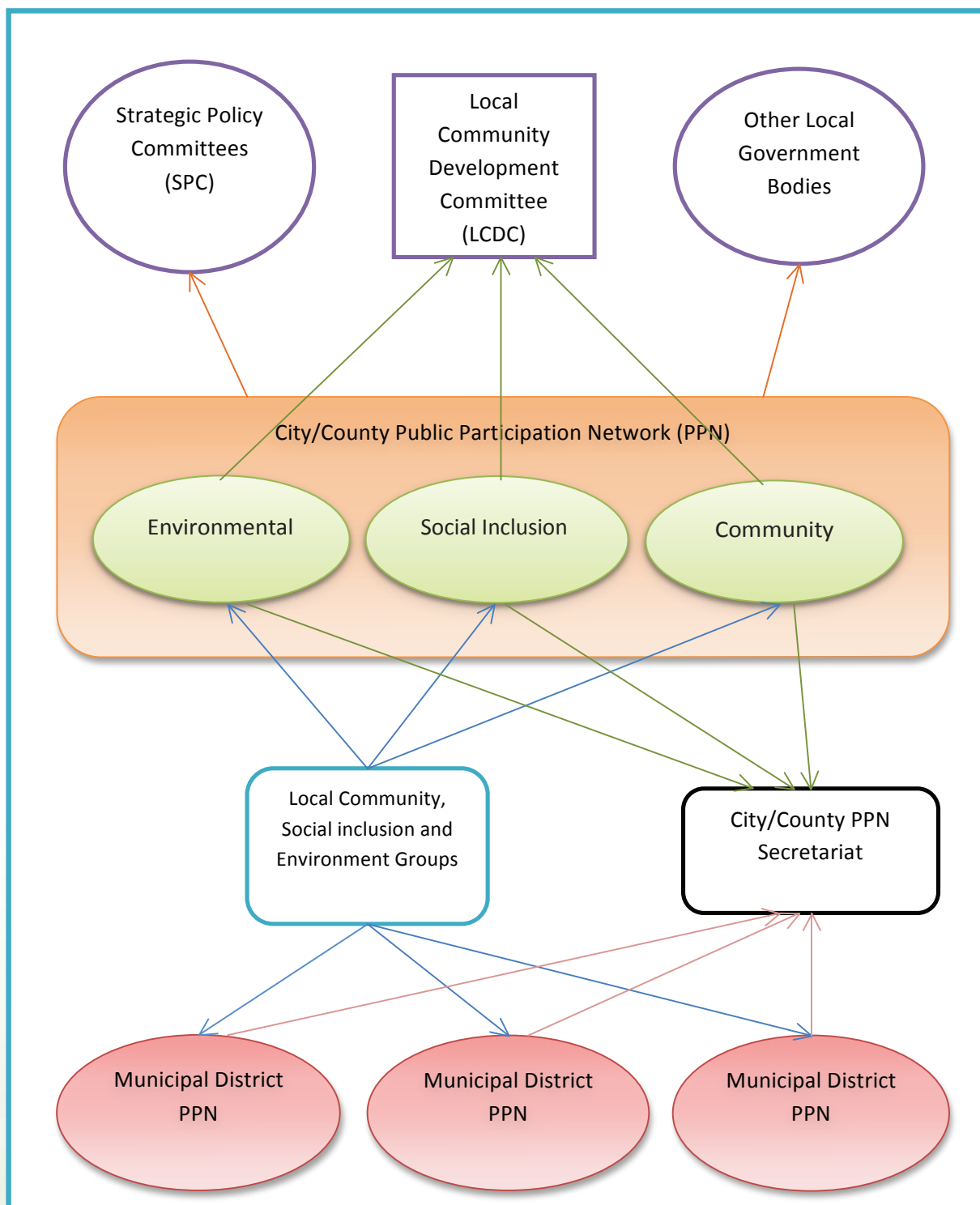


Diagram to show the relationship between the Public Participation Network Structures and Local Government Bodies - The arrows indicate nominating rights of the different bodies. This is just an example, there may be more than three Municipal Districts.

3.7. ELECTIONS of PPN Representatives for various bodies

In all elections of PPN representatives, care will be taken to ensure:

- Gender balance
- Geographical spread of representatives

All nominations are formally ratified at the Plenary meeting of PPN.

3.7.1. Electoral Colleges

Member Organisations when joining the PPN at a county level must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the PPN:

- Environment
- Social Inclusion
- Voluntary

To join the environment Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the Environmental Pillar at a national level.

To join the Social Inclusion Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion / social justice / equality.

Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Voluntary Electoral College.

Each of these three Electoral Colleges

- Chooses an equal number of people (but not less than two) to represent them on the PPN Secretariat (details below).
- Elects two members from among their own college members to represent them on the County's Local Community Development Committee.

3.7.2. Criteria to guide choosing of PPN representatives to any bodies

The following criteria will apply in making the decision about who to nominate:

- The track record of the nominee in working on the issue that is the focus for the representative forum.
- The ability of the nominee to make an effective contribution.
- The participation of people experiencing the problem/issue to be addressed at the representative forum.
- Whether the problem/issue to be addressed at the forum is a 'core issue' for the PPN member.
- As far as possible ensuring fair distribution of positions across geographical areas.
- As far as possible ensuring gender balance.
- A commitment from the person(s) to operate the linkage arrangements set out below.

In addition to the above, the following generic requirements must be met:

- Elected representatives of Local Authorities cannot be nominated through this process.
- If anyone nominated through this process subsequently decides to enter electoral politics he/she must immediately resign their PPN representative role and the relevant nominating PPN unit (Electoral College / Linkage Group) will choose a replacement.
- A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local or national) should not be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.
- Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated.
- All PPN representatives must meet the criteria laid down by the unit that nominates them to their representative role.

3.8. Representing the PPN

The nominees are required to represent the PPN and are accountable to the PPN membership. They are not representing their own organisation.

Specifically the role of the representative is to

- Bring issues of relevance from the body that chose them to the policy making arena.
- Give feedback to their Linkage Group, Electoral College and/or Plenary as appropriate on the outcomes of the policy meetings and the issues being raised.

3.9. Facilitating two-way communication in the Network

In order for the Network structure to meet its objectives, it is critical that the representatives from the PPN actively give and seek 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. It is therefore recommended that for the Network:

- A representative's charter should be agreed
- Feedback forms/mechanisms should be agreed and must be completed by all representatives.
- Web/social media mechanisms should be developed to communicate with the wider Network. This would include putting Agendas and agreed meeting notes up on the web for all structures and sub structures of the Network.
- Newsletters should focus on feeding back and seeking feedback from / to the membership of the Network.
- Specific consultation workshops should be held for particularly significant plans/policies. These could be organised by the Network in order to gather the ideas/suggestions of the wider environmental, community and voluntary sector.
- Updates on all aspects of the work should be provided at Plenary meetings.
- Opportunities for PPN members to feed into plans/policies that might be relevant to them should be highlighted.

3.10. Promoting Well-being

According to a study by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) “a person’s well-being relates to their physical, social and mental state. It requires that basic needs are met, that people have a sense of purpose, and that they feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives they value and have reason to value.”¹⁵ A society’s well-being requires that economic, political, environmental, cultural and social developments all be sustainable. It also requires a focus on inter-generational justice to ensure the well-being of future generations is promoted.

As noted already, the County/City Plenary and the Municipal District Plenary of the PPN will commence their work by going through a process to set out what they consider necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations. This process begins at Municipal District level. Such a statement may also be developed by other units of the PPN structure (e.g. Linkage Groups) if they wish to do so.

This statement will act as a guiding vision statement for everything done by the group that drew up the statement e.g. choosing representatives, taking positions on issues, developing activities of any kind etc.

Well-being statements should be reviewed by the PPN bi-annually.

3.11. Benefits to groups in joining a Network

- Only those groups who are members of the Network may nominate individuals to sit on Boards/Committees as Network participants/representatives
- Receipt of regular information which highlights and promotes the work of the Network and the activities of its members
- Receipt of information on opportunities to learn about and feed into policy and plans that may be relevant to the group
- May be part of a Linkage Group which meets directly and regularly with those representing the PPN on various County Boards/Committees dealing with issues of concern to the particular member organisation.

¹⁵ NESC, 2009 *Well-Being Matters – A Social Report on Ireland*, NESC Dublin.

- Receipt of and submission of information / being part of a communications system managed by the Network
- Vote as an organisation to elect members on the countywide Secretariat
- Participate in training courses and workshops organised by the Network that support the development of the sectors involved and their representation on decision making bodies
- Engage in the wide variety of activities organised by the Network
- Can be elected on to policy making bodies in the city/county.
- Member groups can be part of a collective voice.

3.12. Interaction of the Network with the Local Authority (LA) on LA Committees

The expectation of the Local Authority from the Network representatives is that they will bring the knowledge and expertise of this 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 LA will have a duty of care to ensure that the network is supported so that it can achieve its objective/purpose.

The expectation of the PPN representatives from the Local Authority is that Local Authorities will recognise their right and responsibilities in these areas. They will also have to ensure that engagement with the public really is participative and not simply tokenistic. For genuine participation of the public, user-friendly and easily accessible structures and processes are required.

3.13. Network Meetings

A timeline for Network Meetings across the county should be agreed annually so as to maximise inter-network collaborative working.

Care must be taken by both the Local Authority and the PPN to facilitate as far as possible the participation of volunteers who are not in a position to attend meetings during office hours.

A possible outline agenda for these meetings is set out in Appendix 9 (f)

Attendance at meetings should be monitored for the purpose of identifying problems with the process and structure. In the event of non-attendance for three consecutive Network meetings by an organisational representative, a meeting should be sought between the organisation and Network Facilitator and / or Chair to seek a resolution. If no resolution can be found, a replacement representative will be sought.

3.14. Feedback structures – re representative on decision making structures

- Feedback mechanisms should be agreed and must be completed by all representatives
- Representatives charter should be agreed

As well as meeting regularly with the relevant Linkage Group each person representing the PPN in any arena should complete a report of each meeting for circulation to the Linkage Group and to all others in the Network interested in receiving such reports.

3.15. Supports Necessary to Make the Network Effective

Direct support for the Network structures should be provided by dedicated staff from the Local Authority with the support of Local Development Structures as appropriate.

3.15.1. State Supports necessary to make the Network effective

Government and the local authorities need to play their part in ensuring that the community, voluntary and environmental sectors can actively and positively engage with its decision making forums. The following actions are suggested:

- **Local Authorities** to agree and adopt a Protocol for all committees/decision making committees with PPN representatives which will enable the representatives to engage appropriately
- **Local Authorities** to set aside resources for participation on key decision making committees to cover travel and subsistence expenses for PPN representatives
- **Local Authorities** to facilitate access to a Library of relevant thematic documents focused on groups and committees that the **Network** are represented on

- **Local Authorities** to provide funding for one whole time equivalent staff member for the **Network**. It is essential that this resource is funded on an on-going basis so that the capacity of the development /coordination position is built upon and relationships with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors are developed on an on-going basis.
- **Local Authorities** to provide programme funding for all **Networks** which would allow them to
 - Roll out their annual programme of activity
 - Roll out minimum of 4 newsletters per year
 - develop web site/social media tools
 - Provide training supports for public Participants / Representatives
- Local Authorities to provide additional resources to enable effective participation in these structures. In particular, care should be taken to resource those who are most vulnerable and/or whose voices are least heard.

3.16. Training Supports that may be required for Representatives to enable them build their capacity for the role of PPN Representative.

Training supports should include:

- induction pack for new committee members
- An induction meeting to brief a new member should take place prior to the first policy making meeting
- If a key policy/plan is being developed, a workshop with key information on the policy/plan should be organised to build capacity of community to feed into the policy /plan
- Non-technical summaries of the main points of technical documents should be made available to all members of committees
- Technical mentors should be sought on a voluntary basis initially to enable all members to fully understand technical issues and to aid decision-making
- The Network's administration support should include office accommodation with a library of relevant documents available to representatives focused on the thematic groups they are represented on.
- Networks should organise guest speakers and workshops in relation to current topical areas /policies and plans to ensure members are kept up to date and informed on key national and local policies and plans.

- Network will work with other agencies in the county to develop a specific training plan for representatives that could include topics such as committee skill, advocacy, facilitation skills etc.
- The Network will give priority to training, up-skilling and enabling volunteers.

3.17. Oversight, Monitoring and Evaluation

The work of the PPN should be monitored and evaluated regularly in line with best practice. The focus of this oversight should be an assessment of whether or not they are achieving their overall purpose of facilitating engagement with the local authority and whether the structures, systems and processes are supporting the achievement of that purpose. This could be undertaken by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) or a small Oversight Group appointed by the Minister.

3.17.1. Indicators in relation to measuring the work of the Network

In order to provide assurance that appropriate environmental, community and voluntary structures have been developed on the ground and that they are actively supported to engage with the decision making forums of the local authority, the information listed below should be among the data collated on an annual basis as part of their work programme.

In addition, it is recommended that the **Network** should be monitored on an ongoing basis and audited at least once in the lifetime of the local authority term by the NOAC in terms of its governance and operational structures to ensure that the structure is robust, sustainable and operationally sound.

Suggested Indicators to be collated on an Annual Basis

- Number of members of **the Network**
- Number of representatives on decision making bodies
- Number of decision making bodies that the **Network is** represented on
- Level of attendance at decision-body meetings by PPN Representatives.
- Level of attendance at Linkage Group meetings by PPN Representatives on decision-making bodies.
- Number of consultation workshop held by the **Network**
- Number of newsletters issued
- Number of email newsletters circulated

- Qualitative indicators, e.g. related to effectiveness would need to be developed
- Number of training supports developed or held for **Network** representatives
- Number of feedback forms completed by representatives
- Number of submissions made in relation to new policies/plans
- Number of hits on web site

In this process special attention should be paid to ensuring that the views of the PPN member organisations on promoting the well-being of present and future generations in their locality are being effectively communicated by PPN representatives in all arenas in which they participate.

Appendix 1 – The spectrum of participation

Table. The Spectrum of Participation

This spectrum is an elaboration of one developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969 and published as "A Ladder of Citizen Participation".

INCREASING INTENSITY OF ENGAGEMENT 

1. INFORMATION-GIVING	2. INFORMATION-GATHERING	3. CONSULTATION	4. PARTICIPATION	5. COLLABORATION	6. DELEGATED AUTHORITY
Purpose: To provide people with information to assist their understanding.	Purpose: To collect information about attitudes, opinions and preferences that will assist your understanding and therefore your decision-making.	Purpose: To obtain feedback on specific policies or proposals.	Purpose: To involve people actively at all stages to ensure their concerns are understood and considered, and to give them some influence on and ownership of decisions.	Purpose: To bring people into active partnership and agree sharing of resources and decision-making.	Purpose: To transfer resources and decision-making.
Expectation: That information given will be accurate, balanced and updated as necessary.	Expectation: That information gathered will be treated and used responsibly, and reported honestly.	Expectation: That feedback will be taken seriously, decisions will be influenced, and people will be informed of the influence they	Expectation: That people will be able to shape the process, that it will be transparent throughout, and that they will have some	Expectation: That decision-making will be shared and some resources will be held in common.	Expectation: : That sufficient resources will be transferred to enable decision-

		have had.	influence over decisions.		making, and that what is decided will be implemented.
Examples: Fact sheets Websites Exhibitions	Examples: Surveys Questionnaires Focus groups	Examples: Consultation papers Public meetings Surgeries	Examples: Deliberative workshops Stakeholder dialogue processes	Examples: Advisory Panels Local Strategic Partnerships	Examples: Ballots Referenda Delegated decision-making

Participation is crucial not only for the effectiveness and legitimacy of actions, but also because of the relative lack of "scientific" tools and indicators which can give policy makers instant answers. The development and use of consensus-building and conflict resolution techniques is therefore an important element of sustainable development.

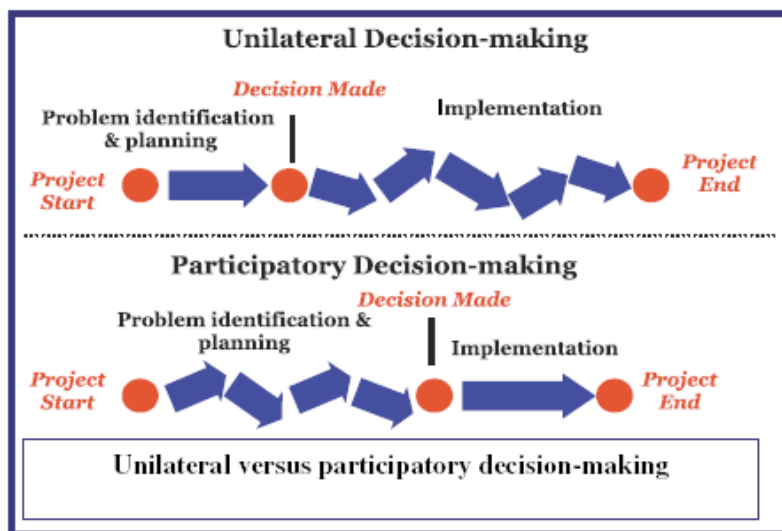
Properly run and credible public participation not only improves the quality of decisions¹⁶, but also, as illustrated in the diagram below, by increasing ownership of the outcomes reduces the likelihood of conflict following the decision made.

Participation for sustainability is also important in recognising the value and relevance of local knowledge.¹⁷ If properly undertaken means that local knowledge is part of the decision making process, and weighed up with knowledge from other

¹⁶ Corburn, J (2003) *Bringing local knowledge into environmental decision making - Improving urban planning for communities at risk*. JOURNAL OF PLANNING EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, 22 (4): 420-433 SUM 2003 ISSN: 0739-456X

¹⁷ Fien, J., Scott, W. & Tilbury, D. (2002) *Exploring Principles of Good Practice: Learning from a metaanalysis of case studies on education within conservation across the WWF network*. Applied Environmental Education and Communication, 1: p. 153-162.

sources, solutions are developed relevant to that community, rather than being imposed by external experts. Successful participation for sustainability involves a wide range of stakeholders including government, community groups, industry, individuals and donors.



*Image from HarmoniCOP Handbook, 1.2.3; "Participatory decision-making processes usually takes much more time than unilateral decision-making by water managers. However, as illustrated in this figure, this is usually more than offset by time gains (and, by implication, effectiveness) in the implementation phase."*¹⁸

The need to base decisions on well informed inclusive debate following adequate consultation is highlighted by Hughes et al in the context of the recent referenda in Ireland.¹⁹

Agenda 21, could lead to greater democracy, encourage an overhaul of institutional arrangements, administrative procedures and legislative frameworks, as well as fostering consensus among different strata and groupings in society.

¹⁸ Ridder, Mostert, Wolters, (2005) *Harmonising Collaborative Planning (HarmoniCOP); Learning Together to Manage Together/Improving Participation in Water Management*

¹⁹ Hughes, I et al. (2007) *Power to the people? Assessing democracy in Ireland.* 52-53, TASC ISBN: 978-1-905494-37-8

Participation is also important in recognising the value and relevance of local knowledge. If properly undertaken it means that local knowledge is part of the decision making process, and that this is weighed up with knowledge from other sources. Solutions are developed relevant to that community, rather than being imposed by external experts. The cultural language of participants is so easily lost in the techno-legalistic processes that deny emotional and visceral knowledge. Successful participation for sustainability involves a wide range of stakeholders including government, community groups, industry, and individuals.

For public participation to be effective at any level, it requires the public to be well informed and kept aware of the possibility of participation. This requires a proactive approach from industry and the relevant public bodies. For public participation to add value to the decision-making, public participation itself must be valued by those entrusted with making the final decisions.

Appendix 2 – Examples of Local Government Bodies to which Networks could nominate representatives

1. Strategic policy committees (culture; transportation; water services; planning; economic development; community development; housing etc.
2. Local Community Development Committees
3. Transportation Co-ordination Units
4. Sports Partnerships
5. Childcare Committees
6. Traveller Interagency Committees
7. Traveller Accommodation Committees
8. Homeless Committees
9. Children Services Committees
10. Joint Policing Committees

Appendix 3 - The White Paper on Developing a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector (2000), Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Chapter 1 - Overview

Voluntary activity is an essential sign of a society where people are concerned for each other. The Government recognises the worth of every type of volunteerism and voluntary activity and does not believe that it should seek to regulate or be involved with every type of activity. The specific purpose of this White Paper is to deal with the formal interaction between the State and Community and Voluntary sector. **(1.1)**

Voluntary activity spans the whole range of social activity and is a vital element of democracy. A strong democracy enhances and protects the capacity of citizens to participate. In a strong democracy people regard the State, not as the answer to every problem, but as just one player among others. All the others - the private Sector, trade unions, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations, sporting organisations, local community and residents' associations – play a pivotal role in democratic life and in continued economic and social progress. **(1.2)**

Voluntary activity has tremendous potential to foster reconciliation and mutual understanding between the two communities in Northern Ireland and between North and South. The Government will continue to support and encourage such work. Cross-border linkages have the potential to deepen our understanding of each other. **(1.3)**

In the Government's vision of society, the ability of the Community and Voluntary sector to provide channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens is fundamental. **An active Community and Voluntary sector contributes to a democratic,** **(1.4)**

pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised and participative structures and fosters a climate in which the quality of life can be enhanced for all.

(1.5)

This is a key point.

The Government regards statutory support of the Community and Voluntary sector as having an importance to the well-being of our society that goes beyond 'purchase' of services by this or that statutory agency. The Government's vision of society is one which encourages people and communities to look after their own needs - very often in partnership with statutory agencies - but without depending on the State to meet all needs.

The importance and role of voluntary activity to the well-being of society and democracy underpins the Government's approach in this White Paper. **(1.6 - 1.7)**

2001 is UN International Year of Volunteers. The Government is particularly keen to encourage new volunteers to come forward and to foster a culture of support for volunteering in schools and third level institutions. As provided for in the **Programme for Prosperity and Fairness**, a National Committee on Volunteering will be established. **(1.8)**



OECD Public Management Policy Brief

Appendix 4

Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation

Reaping the benefits ...

Strengthening relations with citizens is a sound investment in better policy-making and a core element of good governance. It allows government to tap new sources of policy-relevant ideas, information and resources when making decisions. Equally important, it contributes to building public trust in government, raising the quality of democracy and strengthening civic capacity. Such efforts help strengthen representative democracy, in which parliaments play a central role.

...by taking concrete steps...

In strengthening their relations with citizens, governments must ensure that:

- information is complete, objective, reliable, relevant, easy to find and to understand;
- consultation has clear goals and rules defining the limits of the exercise and government's obligation to account for its use of citizens' input;
- participation provides sufficient time and flexibility to allow for the emergence of new ideas and proposals by citizens, as well as mechanisms for their integration into government policy-making processes.

...to build commitment and capacity

Governments must invest adequate time, resources and commitment in building robust legal, policy and institutional frameworks, developing appropriate tools and evaluating their own performance in engaging citizens in policy-making. Poorly designed and inadequate measures for information, consultation and active participation in policy-making can undermine government-citizen relations. Governments may seek to inform, consult and engage citizens in order to enhance the quality, credibility and legitimacy of their policy decisions... only to produce the opposite effect if citizens discover that their efforts to stay informed, provide feedback and actively participate are ignored, have no impact at all on the decisions reached or remain unaccounted for.

This Policy Brief describes a range of concrete measures and suggests ten guiding principles for strengthening government relations with citizens and civil society.

Why strengthen government-citizen relations?

OECD countries are strengthening their relations with citizens, in order to:

- Improve the quality of policy, by allowing governments to tap wider sources of information, perspectives, and potential solutions in order to meet the challenges of policy-making under conditions of increasing complexity, policy interdependence and time pressures.
- Meet the challenges of the emerging information society, to prepare for greater and faster interactions with citizens and ensure better knowledge management.
- Integrate public input into the policy-making process, in order to respond to citizens' expectations that their voices be heard, and their views be considered, in decision-making by government.
- Respond to calls for greater government transparency and accountability, as public and media scrutiny of government actions increases, standards in public life are codified and raised.
- Strengthen public trust in government and reverse the steady erosion of voter turn-out in elections, falling membership in political parties and surveys showing declining confidence in key public institutions.

Defining government-citizen relations in policy-making

Government-citizen relations cover a broad spectrum of interactions at each stage of the policy-making cycle: from policy design, through implementation to evaluation. In reviewing this complex relationship, the OECD survey used the following working definitions:

- **Information:** a one-way relation in which government produces and delivers information for use by citizens. It covers both 'passive' access to information upon demand by citizens and 'active' measures by government to disseminate information to citizens.



- **Consultation:** a two-way relation in which citizens provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition by government of the issue on which citizens' views are being sought and requires the provision of information.



- **Active participation:** a relation based on partnership with government, in which citizens actively engage in the policy-making process. It acknowledges a role for citizens in proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue -- although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with government.



Main trends

Policy-making in all OECD countries rests on the foundation of representative democracy. Within this framework, many OECD countries have long-standing traditions of extensive citizen involvement. All are looking for new, and complementary, ways to include citizens in policy-making. Trends show that:

- **Information** for citizens is now an objective shared by all OECD countries. The scope, quantity and quality of government information provided to the public has increased greatly over the past decade.
- **Consultation** and opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on policy proposals is also on the rise, but at a slower rate. **Large differences remain between OECD countries.**
- **Active participation** and efforts to engage citizens in policy-making on a partnership basis are rare, undertaken on a pilot basis only and confined to a very few OECD countries.

Building legal, policy and institutional frameworks

Information is a basic precondition

Access to information requires sound legislation, clear institutional mechanisms for its application and independent oversight institutions and judiciary for enforcement. Finally, it requires citizens' to know and understand their rights -- and to be willing and able to act upon them.

- **Laws:** the trend in adopting access to information laws has clearly gathered pace in recent years. In 1980 only 20% of OECD countries had legislation on access to information (also known as freedom of information, or FOI, laws). In 1990, this figure had risen to just over 40%, and by the end of 2000 it had reached 80%. In several OECD countries, access is the rule and secrecy is the exception. All provide access to documents held by public authorities and appeal mechanisms in cases of refusal.
- **Policies:** basic legal rights are given substance through government commitment to provide objective and reliable information. Policies on both 'passive' (e.g. response times or charging) and 'active' access to information (e.g. government communications policy) are needed.
- **Institutions:** Access to information laws generally apply to all administrative units. Implementation may be co-ordinated (e.g. by central government) and subject to external oversight (e.g. by the Ombudsman).

All OECD countries must reconcile the citizen's right to know with the individual's right to privacy and the need to preserve confidentiality where disclosure of information would be against the public interest. Balancing rights of access, protection of privacy and limits to official secrecy is a significant challenge -- especially given the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Consultation is central to policy-making

Consultation has only recently been recognised as an essential element of public policy-making in the majority of OECD countries -- legal, policy and institutional frameworks are still under development.

- **Laws:** Legislation on public consultation may be broad (e.g. establishing petition rights or consultative referenda) or restricted in scope (e.g. requiring consultation with trade unions, professional associations or indigenous peoples during policy-making).
- **Policies:** Some OECD countries rely on rules (e.g. cabinet orders, guidelines, standards) and informal practice when conducting public consultation. Several require public consultation on new regulations (e.g. under regulatory impact assessment procedures), in line with the 1995 OECD Council Recommendation on Improving the Quality of Government Regulation.
- **Institutions:** Several OECD countries have long-standing institutional arrangements for consultation (e.g. tripartite forums of government, business and labour). Many have established permanent or *ad hoc* advisory bodies and commissions that include civil society organisations (CSOs).

Active participation is a new frontier

Active participation recognises the capacity of citizens to discuss and generate policy options independently. It requires governments to share in agenda-setting and to ensure that policy proposals generated jointly will be taken into account in reaching a final decision. Only a few OECD countries have begun to explore such approaches and experience to date is limited.

- **Laws:** Citizens in some OECD countries have the right to propose new legislation or policy (e.g. under laws on popular legislative initiative or on citizen-initiated referenda). These usually require the prior collection of signatures from a proportion of eligible voters within a specific timeframe.
- **Policies:** A few OECD countries have policies to support new, flexible approaches to ensuring a greater degree of active participation by citizens in policy-making (e.g. joint working groups).
- **Institutions:** There is no single institutional interface. The few examples that exist to date are drawn from different levels of government and policy sectors. Central policy units may play a role in collecting good practices, raising awareness, and developing guidelines.

Matching tools to objectives

The first step in the design of successful information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is to clearly **define the objective** of the exercise - on the basis of which the **target group** (e.g. all citizens, rural communities, youth) may be identified and an appropriate tool chosen.

- **No single tool or approach** will be suitable for every country or situation. Often a **mix of tools** will be required, and these may need to be adapted to local traditions and practices. The choice of tools will also depend upon the resources (e.g. financial and human), time and skills available.
- **Information:** Even 'passive' access to information requires tools to enable citizens to find what they are looking for (e.g. catalogues and indexes). When governments engage in the 'active' provision of information, they may use a range of different products (e.g. annual reports, brochures, leaflets) and delivery mechanisms, which may be either direct (e.g. information centres, toll-free phone numbers) or indirect (e.g. media coverage, advertising, civil society organisations as intermediaries).
- **Consultation:** Governments use different tools to seek feedback on policy issues (e.g. opinion polls and surveys) or on draft policies and laws (e.g. comment and notice periods) from a broad range of citizens. They may also use tools for consultation that provide greater levels of interaction (e.g. public hearings, focus groups, citizen panels, workshops) with smaller groups of citizens.
- **Active participation:** Engaging citizens in policy deliberation requires specific tools to facilitate learning, debate and the drafting of concrete proposals (e.g. citizens' fora, consensus conferences, citizens' juries).

Unlocking the potential of ICT

All OECD countries regard new information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a **powerful tool** and are making significant efforts to bring their administrations and their citizens 'on-line'. While many believe ICTs have great potential for engaging citizens in policy-making, today they remain complementary to traditional tools. Most OECD governments are working to bridge the 'digital divide', and recognise the need to ensure that all citizens, whether on-line or not, continue to enjoy equal rights of participation in the public sphere.

- **Information:** All governments in OECD countries provide an increasing amount of information on-line (e.g. via government websites and portals), although the quantity, quality and range varies greatly.
- **Consultation:** The use of ICTs for feedback and consultation is still in its infancy in all OECD countries (e.g. e-mail addresses on government websites, e-mail lists, on-line chat events).
- **Active participation:** Only a very few OECD countries have begun to experiment with on-line tools to actively engage citizens in policy-making (e.g. on-line discussion groups, interactive games).

Integration with established, 'off-line' tools and approaches is needed to make the most of ICTs.

Evaluating performance

All OECD countries recognise the **need to develop tools** and to improve their capacity for evaluation. The survey shows a striking imbalance between the amount of time, money and energy that OECD countries invest in strengthening government-citizen relations and the amount of attention they pay to evaluating effectiveness and impact on policy-making.

No OECD country currently conducts a systematic evaluation of government performance in providing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens in policy-making.

Guiding principles for engaging citizens in policy-making

The survey suggests the following guiding principles for successful information, consultation and active participation in policy-making:

1. Commitment

Leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is needed at all levels - from politicians, senior managers and public officials.

2. Rights

Citizens' rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent institutions for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights.

3. Clarity

Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and active participation during policy-making should be well defined from the outset. The respective roles and responsibilities of citizens (in providing input) and government (in making decisions for which they are accountable) must be clear to all.

4. Time

Public consultation and active participation should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective. Information is needed at all stages of the policy cycle.

5. Objectivity

Information provided by government during policy-making should be objective, complete and accessible. All citizens should have equal treatment when exercising their rights of access to information and participation.

6. Resources

Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in policy-making are to be effective. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports their efforts.

7. Co-ordination

Initiatives to inform, request feedback from and consult citizens should be co-ordinated across government to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of 'consultation fatigue' among citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs). Co-ordination efforts should not reduce the capacity of government units to pursue innovation and ensure flexibility.

8. Accountability

Governments have an obligation to account for the use they make of citizens' inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing government accountability overall.

9. Evaluation

Governments need the tools, information and capacity to evaluate their performance in providing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens in order to adapt to new requirements and changing conditions for policy-making.

10. Active citizenship

Governments benefit from active citizens and a dynamic civil society and can take concrete actions to facilitate access to information and participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens' civic education and skills as well as to support capacity-building among civil society organisations.

About this Policy Brief

This policy brief is designed to support policy-makers in building effective frameworks for information, consultation and active participation by citizens in public policy-making. It draws heavily upon the experience and insights of national experts and senior officials from the centres of government in OECD countries, whose deliberations have provided the Secretariat with broad comparative perspectives and concrete examples of good practice. The Policy Brief is based on the main findings of two OECD surveys carried out in 1999-2000 on "Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections" and "Using Information Technology to Strengthen Government-Citizen Connections". The surveys were based on self-reporting by OECD countries: central governments provided information on current provisions for, and practice in, providing information, opportunities for consultation and active participation of citizens in policy-making.

Promoting good governance

The OECD supports its Member countries in building and strengthening effective, efficient, transparent and accountable government structures. Access to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making contributes to good governance by fostering greater transparency in policy-making; more accountability through direct public scrutiny and oversight; enhanced legitimacy of government decision-making processes; better quality policy decisions based on a wider range of information sources; and, finally, higher levels of implementation and compliance given greater public awareness of policies and participation in their design.

More information

The OECD publication "Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation", on which this policy brief is based, is a unique source of comparative information on measures for strengthening citizens access to information, consultation and participation in policy-making. It does not attempt to evaluate or rank countries in terms of their progress in strengthening government-citizen relations. Rather, it offers an overall framework within which to examine a wide range of country experiences, identify examples of good practice and highlight innovative approaches. In doing so, the report takes into account the great diversity of country contexts and objectives in strengthening government-citizen relations to be found among OECD countries.

The report is accompanied by a "Handbook on Strengthening Government-Citizen Relations" designed for government officials in OECD Member and non-member countries. The handbook offers a practical guide in building robust frameworks for informing, consulting and engaging citizens in policy-making.

The report and accompanying handbook will be published in early October 2001 and may be purchased from the OECD Online Bookshop (<http://www.oecd.org/bookshop/>). This policy brief and the handbook will be made available free on-line on the PUMA web site (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/citizens/>). For more information on PUMA's work on government-citizen relations, contact joanne.caddy@oecd.org.

Next steps

The OECD report and policy brief will be the subject of public discussion and debate with representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs). Events planned include: national workshops organised by participating governments, an international roundtable event and an on-line electronic discussion forum hosted on the PUMA web site.

PUMA's future work programme on E-government will also focus on two key aspects of government-citizen relations, namely: a) the use of new ICTs in consulting citizens and civil society for policy-making and b) on-line service delivery.





Appendix 5

CONF/PLE(2009)CODE1

**CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION
IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Adopted by the Conference of INGOs at its meeting on 1st October 2009

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I. Introduction

One of the major concerns of modern democracies is the alienation of citizens from the political processes. In this context, as in many others, civil society constitutes an important element of the democratic process. It provides citizens with an alternative way, alongside those of political parties and lobbies, of channelling different views and securing a variety of interests in the decision-making process.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recognised – in CM/Recommendation(2007)14 of October 2007 – “the essential contribution made by NGOs to the development and realisation of democracy and human rights, in particular through the promotion of public awareness, participation in public life and securing the transparency and accountability of public authorities”.

At the meeting of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy held in Sweden in June 2007, participants called on the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe to prepare a Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation which would cover subjects such as mechanisms for NGO participation in decision-making processes and civil society involvement in public policy.

Thus, the Conference of INGOs built upon this by taking the responsibility to draft the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process. This document lays out the rationale, the framework and the means for enhanced civil participation. It was prepared by experienced civil society representatives, elaborated in a pan-European consultation process, tested and commented by members of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and is already being used by activists and representatives of authorities.

The Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe has produced a user-friendly, structured and pragmatic instrument aimed at decision makers and organised civil society, including NGOs.

The Code offers a repertoire of good practices. It does not have a mandatory character, does not prescribe rules, or require enforcement mechanisms. It offers all actors in the democratic process guidelines stemming from concrete practical experience of dialogue and co-operation between NGOs and public authorities. The final aim is to facilitate their interaction and to enhance citizens' empowerment and participation in the democratic process at local, regional and national levels.

The Conference sought advice and input from other Council of Europe institutions. Both the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcomed the Code of Good Practice: the Congress stands ready to contribute to its promotion and to use it in its work, and the Parliamentary Assembly, for its part, highlighted the particular importance of e-tools in participation.

This instrument should have and will have political repercussions. It will give impetus and backing to the current trend among local, regional and national authorities to consult and co-operate with civil society in bringing modern tools in democratic governance and at the

same time deepening citizen participation in public life.

II. Objectives and targets

The principal objective of this Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation is to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for NGOs in Council of Europe member States and Belarus by defining at European level a set of general principles, guidelines, tools and mechanisms for civil participation in the political decision-making process. The intent is that the Code of Good Practice will be implemented at local, regional and national level. The Code of Good Practice is based on actual experiences from NGOs across Europe sharing their good practices and valid methods for engaging with public authorities.

An additional objective for the Code of Good Practice is to be a relevant and effective tool for NGOs from local to international level in their dialogue with parliament, government and public authorities. It aims to be an interactive instrument and to be action-oriented so that it is useful for NGOs as well as public authorities across Europe. As a way of supporting the application of this Code of Good Practice, there will also be a bank of case studies and an additional set of practical tools.

The Code of Good Practice is aimed at national NGOs including regional and local organisations in Council of Europe member States and Belarus, as well as organisations at European and international level.

It also targets public authorities, which includes parliament, government and public administration at local, regional and national level. The target is wide, but it is intended that there are segments of the Code of Good Practice that can be used at all levels of public administration.

III. General Framework for Civil Participation

III.i Parameters of Civil Society

NGOs and organised civil society are essential contributors to the development and realisation of democracy and human rights. A Council of Europe definition of NGOs can be found in the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2007) 14, which states that 'NGOs are voluntary self-governing bodies or organisations established to pursue the essentially non-profit-making objectives of their founders or members.' In relation to this Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation the term is taken to refer to organised civil society including voluntary groups, non-profit organisations, associations, foundations, charities, as well as geographic or interest-based community and advocacy groups. The core activities of NGOs are focused on values of social justice, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In these areas the purpose of NGOs is to promote causes and improve the lives of people.

NGOs form a crucial component of participation in an open, democratic society through engaging large numbers of individuals. The fact that many of these individuals also are *voters* underlines the complementary relationship with representative democracy.

NGOs can bring benefits of knowledge and independent expertise to the process of decision making. This has led governments at all levels, from local and regional to national, as well as international institutions, to draw on the relevant experience and competence of NGOs to assist in policy development and implementation. NGOs enjoy a unique trust from their members and society to voice concerns, to represent their interests and to gain involvement in causes, thereby providing crucial input into policy development.

This text highlights the contribution of *organised civil society* in the democratic process and is not focused on the related question of civic participation, i.e. *individuals*. In this case it is understood that the act of developing associations and community organisations constitutes an act of independent social organisation and is not purely centred on individual action. It is understood that organised groups exist to further the needs of their members and for the benefit of wider society; therefore they act as a key channel of participation and multiplier for the engagement of citizens.

III.ii Principles for Civil Participation

To foster a constructive relationship, NGOs and the public authorities at different levels, should act on the following common principles:

Participation

NGOs collect and channel views of their members, user groups and concerned citizens. This input provides crucial value to the political decision-making process, enhancing the quality, understanding and longer term applicability of the policy initiative. A pre-condition for this principle is that the processes for participation are open and accessible, based on agreed parameters for participation.

Trust

An open and democratic society is based on honest interaction between actors and sectors.

Although NGOs and public authorities have different roles to play, the shared goal of improving the lives of people can only be satisfactorily reached if based on trust, implying transparency, respect and mutual reliability.

Accountability and transparency

Acting in the public interest requires openness, responsibility, clarity and accountability from both the NGOs and public authorities, with transparency at all stages.

Independence

NGOs must be recognised as free and independent bodies in respect to their aims, decisions and activities. They have the right to act independently and advocate positions different from the authorities with whom they may otherwise cooperate.

III.iii Conditions for Civil Participation

The conditions to enable associational life are well documented. In accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), these require freedom of expression (Article 10 ECHR) and freedom of assembly and association (Article 11 ECHR) and the relevant case law of the European Court for Human Rights.

To ensure that the essential contributions of NGOs are enshrined in the political decision-making process without discrimination, an enabling environment is required. Conditions of an enabling environment include the rule of law, adherence to fundamental democratic principles, political will, favourable legislation, clear procedures, long-term support and resources for a sustainable civil society and shared spaces for dialogue and cooperation. These conditions allow for a constructive relationship between NGOs and public authorities built on reciprocal trust and mutual understanding for *participatory democracy*.

IV. How to Engage

To meet the principal policy objective of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation as well as to ensure its relevance and practical applicability for NGOs in their involvement in the political decision-making process, this section outlines how civil society may participate.

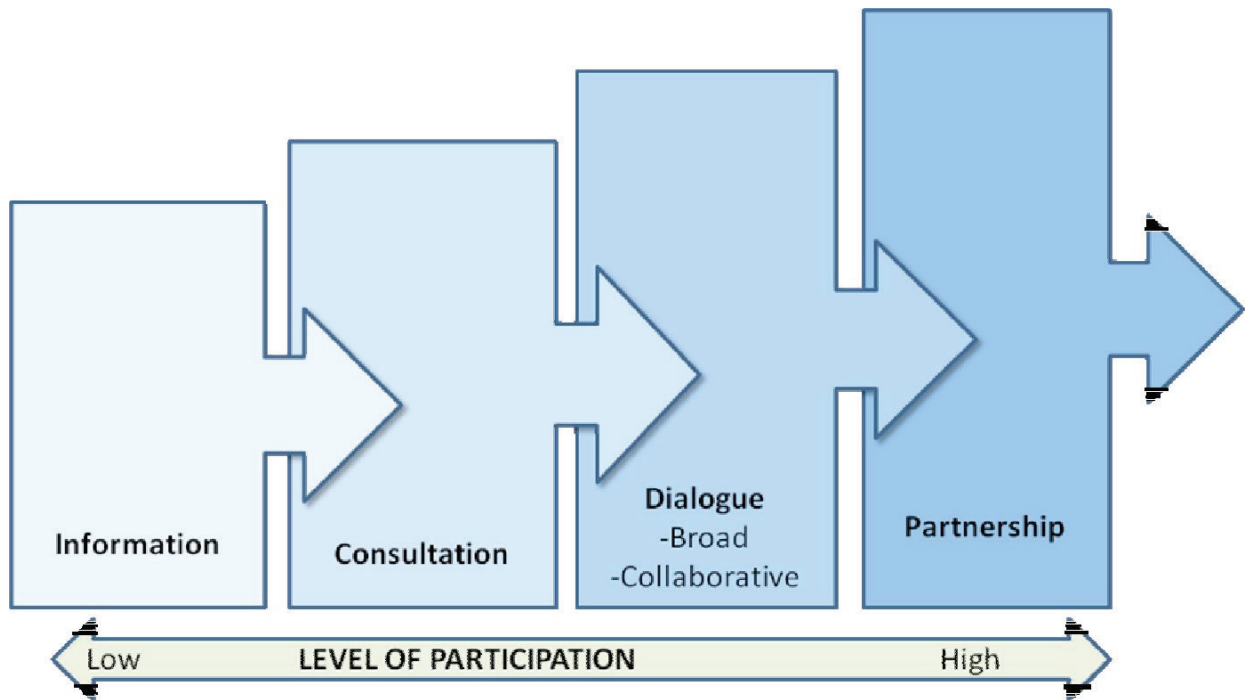
There are two interconnected dimensions to this process. Firstly levels of participation are described in section III.i, sorted in the order of increasing intensity, from simple provision of information to consultation, dialogue and finally partnership between NGOs and public authorities. Secondly the steps in the political decision-making process are outlined in section III.ii, namely the six steps taken by public authorities from agenda setting through implementation to monitoring and reformulation.

A separate section (III.iii) offers tools that may apply at any stage and that provide cross-cutting support to the process of participation.

These elements are then combined to form a matrix of civil participation (IV) that provides a visual presentation of the inter-related nature of the process.

IV.i The different levels of participation

The involvement of NGOs in the different steps of the political decision-making process varies based on the intensity of participation. There are four gradual levels of participation, from least to most participative. These are: information; consultation; dialogue; and partnership. They may be applied at any step in the decision-making process but they are often particularly relevant at certain points in the process.



1. Information

Access to information is the basis for all subsequent steps in the involvement of NGOs in the political decision-making process. This is a relatively low level of participation which usually consists of a one-way provision of information from the public authorities and no interaction or involvement with NGOs is required or expected.

Information is relevant for all steps in the decision-making process.

2. Consultation

This is a form of initiative where the public authorities ask NGOs for their opinion on a specific policy topic or development. Consultation usually includes the authorities informing NGOs of current policy developments and asking for comments, views and feed-back. The initiative and themes originate with the public authorities, not with the NGOs.

Consultation is relevant for all steps of the decision-making process, especially for drafting, monitoring and reformulation.

3. Dialogue

The initiative for dialogue can be taken by either party and can be either **broad** or **collaborative**.

A broad dialogue is a two-way communication built on mutual interests and potentially shared objectives to ensure a regular exchange of views. It ranges from open public hearings to specialised meetings between NGOs and public authorities. The discussion remains wide ranging and is not explicitly linked to a current policy development process.

A collaborative dialogue is built on mutual interests for a specific policy development. The collaborative dialogue usually leads to a joint recommendation, strategy or legislation. Collaborative dialogue is more empowered than the broad dialogue as it consists of joint, often frequent and regular, meetings to develop core policy strategies and often leads to agreed outcomes.

Dialogue is highly valued at all steps in the political decision-making cycle, but is crucial for agenda setting, drafting and reformulation.

4. Partnership

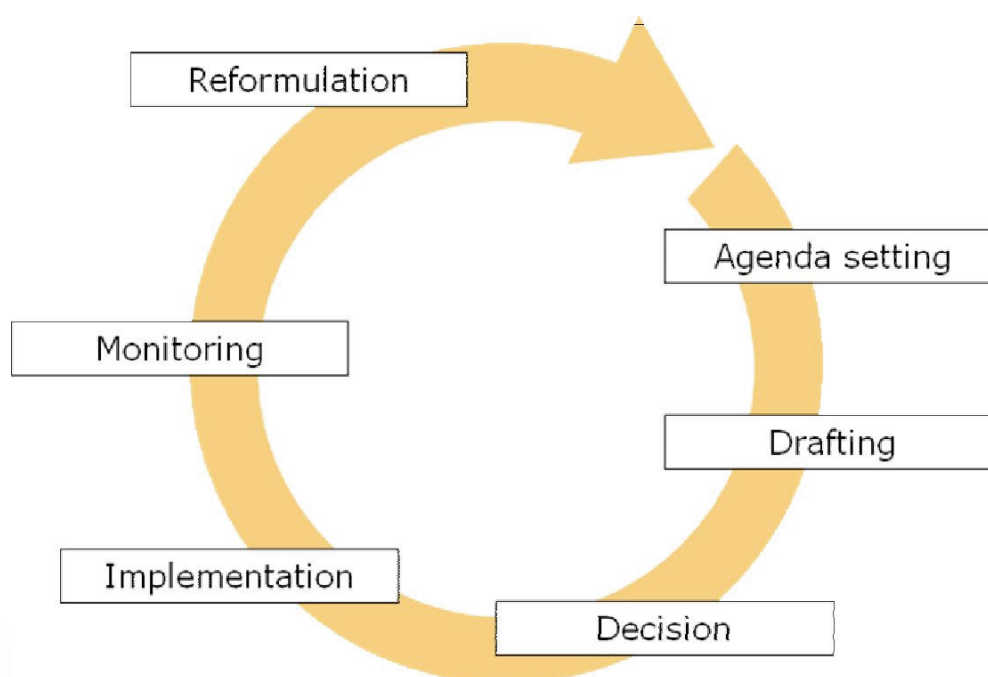
A partnership implies shared responsibilities in each step of the political decision-making process from agenda setting, drafting, decision and implementation of policy initiatives. It is the highest form of participation.

At this level NGOs and the public authorities come together for a close cooperation while ensuring that the NGOs continue to be independent and have the right to campaign and act irrespective of a partnership situation. Partnership can include activities such as delegation of a specific task to an NGO, for example delivery of services, as well as participatory forums and the establishment of co-decision-making bodies, including for resource allocation.

Partnership may take place at all steps of the political decision-making process and is particularly relevant at the agenda setting or implementation steps.

IV.ii Steps in the political decision-making process

The cycle below defines the six different steps of the political decision-making process agenda setting, drafting of policy, decision-making, implementation of policy, monitoring and reformulation of policy. Each step offers opportunities for NGOs and public authorities to interact.



1. Agenda setting

The political agenda is agreed by the parliament and government but can be shaped by NGOs, or groups of NGOs, through campaigns and lobbying for issues, needs and concerns. New policy initiatives are often the result of influence of the campaigns of NGOs. During this step NGOs aim to influence decision-makers on behalf of a collective interest and act in a way that is complementary to political debate.

Contributions of NGOs:

- **Advocating:** raise issues, concerns and needs for a specific user group, point of view or a general public interest that is not yet covered by legislation or other policy documents, instruments or measures
- **Information and awareness building:** share NGO findings with the public authorities, involve and represent members, users and key citizen groups and act as channels to reach citizens; to listen, react and inform
- **Expertise and advice:** experts with knowledge on a specific topic play a key role in setting the political agenda. Their analysis and research identify current and future needs in

society and provide crucial perspectives

- **Innovation:** development of new solutions and approaches; demonstrating how these may be brought onto the political agenda
- **Service provision:** key actor in forming policy and creating alternative or non-existing services for a specific user group

Responsibilities of public authorities:

- **Information sharing:** Provision of up-to-date accurate and timely information in an accessible format for all interested parties
- **Procedures:** Develop and adhere to a transparent decision-making process. Provide clear, open and accessible procedures for participation
- **Resource provision:** Enable the active participation of civil society through for example, budgetary provision, in-kind support or administrative services
- **Responsiveness:** Ensure active involvement of relevant public authority representatives; listen, react and give feedback

Useful tools and mechanisms:

- **Information:**
 - o **Easy and open access** to relevant, accurate and timely **information** on policy process, documents and political decision-makers, e.g. online databases
 - o **Research** to understand an issue of concern and develop suggested solutions
 - o **Campaigning and lobbying** by NGOs based on awareness-raising such as policy papers, posters and leaflets, websites, media releases and public demonstrations
 - o **Website** with comprehensive access to key documents and announcement of public events
- **Consultation:**
 - o **Petitioning**, can be through online tools, such as e-petition or web-forum
 - o **Consultation**, online or other techniques, to collect interests and suggestions from stakeholders
- **Dialogue:**
 - o **Hearings and public forums** with interested stakeholders to identify and interpret the sensitivities and interests of the different groups
 - o **Citizens' forums and future councils** to discuss with citizens and NGOs
 - o **Key government contact** enabling civil society to access information on current policy initiatives
- **Partnership:**
 - o **Work group or committee** formed as a permanent or ad hoc expert group to advise on policy preferences

2. Drafting

Public authorities usually have well-established processes for policy drafting. Here NGOs are often involved in areas such as identifying problems, proposing solutions and providing evidence for their preferred proposal with, for example, interviews or research. Facilitating opportunities for consultation should be a key element in this step as well as various forms of dialogue to collect input from key stakeholders.

Contribution of NGOs:

- **Advocating:** guaranteeing that consideration is given to the needs and interests of stakeholders affected by the draft policy
- **Information and awareness building:** NGOs inform members, users and key citizens' groups about the drafting process
- **Expertise and advice:** provide analyses and research on issues under consideration or raise additional priorities to be included in the policy draft
- **Innovation:** provide solutions through the introduction of new approaches, practical solutions and concrete models which bring benefits to specific user groups
- **Service provision:** input to policy drafting to ensure consideration is given to their specific users' needs and that necessary conditions are met
- **Watchdog function:** Follow the drafting process to make sure stakeholder concerns are considered and that the process is inclusive and transparent

Responsibilities of public authorities:

- **Information sharing:** Provision of timely and comprehensive information on current consultation processes
- **Procedures:** Develop and adhere to minimum consultation standards, such as clear objectives, rules for participation, timelines, contacts etc. Organise open consultation meetings, including invitation to all potential stakeholders
- **Resource provision:** Provide adequate timelines and means for consultation to ensure participation of different levels of civil society
- **Responsiveness:** Ensure active involvement of relevant public authority representatives; listen, react and give feedback to consultation responses

Useful tools and mechanisms:

- **Information:**
 - Open and free access to policy documents**, including single information point for policy drafting, with information available in different formats to reach the public
 - Website** with comprehensive access to key documents and announcement of public events
 - Campaigns and lobbying** to shape the draft policy through position documents, letters, manifestos
 - Web casts** from hearings, meetings and debates allowing people to watch and listen in real time
 - Research** to provide input to the policy drafting process
- **Consultation and dialogue:**
 - Hearings and questions & answer panels** with stakeholders to identify and interpret the sensitivities and concerns and collect proposals, face-to-face or online
 - Expert seminars and meetings** involving experts in the development of specialised research or studies that can be used in the drafting
 - Multi-stakeholder committees and advisory bodies** consisting of or including representatives from the NGO sector; could be permanent or ad-hoc
- **Partnership:**
 - Co-drafting:** active involvement in drafting parts of the legislative process

3. Decision

The forms of political decision-taking vary based on national context and legislation. Common characteristics are the establishment of a government policy directive by a ministry; or legislation, such as passing a law by parliamentary vote; or public referendum, which then requires enabling legislation. Draft laws and motions should be open to input and participation of NGOs. The public authorities should evaluate different views and opinions before the decision is taken. At this step consultation is central to informed decision. However the final power of choice lies with the public authorities, unless the decision is taken by a public vote, referendum or a co-decision mechanism.

Contribution of NGOs:

- **Advocating:** influencing the decision makers before a vote
- **Information and awareness building:** informing membership, users and key citizens' groups about the political decisions and their potential effect
- **Expertise and advice:** provision of detailed analysis to inform and influence decision makers
- **Watchdog function:** following the decision-making process, making sure it is democratic, transparent and optimally effective

Responsibilities of public authorities:

- **Information sharing:** Provide information on policies currently in the decision-making process
- **Procedures:** Offer and follow procedures for co-decision mechanisms where applicable
- **Resource provision:** Enable and support the active participation of civil society by associating NGOs in the decision step
- **Responsiveness:** Listen, take into consideration and respond to civil society input

Useful tools and mechanisms:

Information:

Campaigning and lobbying to influence the decision makers, for example using leaflets, websites, media releases and public demonstrations

Consultation and dialogue:

Open plenary or committee sessions to ensure open access to debates during the decision-making

Partnership:

Joint decision-making through forums, consensus conferences and other participatory meetings

Co-decision making such as participative budgeting

4. Implementation

This is the step at which many NGOs are most active, for example in service delivery and project execution. Much of the work done by NGOs in the previous steps includes attempts to influence the implementation of policy. This phase is especially important to ensure that the intended outcome will be fulfilled. Access to clear and transparent information on expectations and opportunities is important at this step, as well as active partnerships.

Contribution of NGOs:

- **Information and awareness building:** primarily focused on public awareness raising, explanation of benefits or disadvantages and impact of policy
- **Service provision:** one key actor in implementing policy initiatives, often carrying the main responsibility for delivery
- **Watchdog function:** to assess and ensure that the policy is implemented as intended without harmful side-effects

Responsibilities of public authorities:

- **Information sharing:** Provide information on implementation strategies, public tendering procedures and project guidelines
- **Procedures:** Follow established rules and regulations for policy implementation
- **Resource provision:** Enable the active participation of civil society in the implementation

step through for example, budgetary provision, in-kind support or administrative services

- **Responsiveness:** Be available and react to specific needs arising from circumstances around policy implementation

Useful tools and mechanisms:

- **Information:**
 - Open and free access** to public sector documents relating to projects and implementation decisions
 - Website** with comprehensive access to key documents and announcement of public events
 - E-mail alerts** announcing upcoming project and funding opportunities
 - FAQs** online or other channels to offer information presented as questions and answers, targeted towards providing practical help and guidance
 - Publicly advertised tender procedure** to provide an open transparent process for service provision
- **Consultation:**
 - Events, conferences, forums and seminars** to inform and discuss the implementation of policy with NGOs and the public
- **Dialogue:**
 - Capacity building seminars** to increase knowledge and capacity relevant to the implementation
 - Training seminars** for NGOs and public authorities in specific topics relevant to implementation, such as procurement, project and funding applications
- **Partnership:**
 - Strategic partnership** where NGOs and public authorities form a partnership to implement policy; this may range from a small pilot scheme to a full implementation responsibility

5. Monitoring

At this point the role of NGOs is to monitor and assess the outcomes of the implemented policy. It is important to have in place an effective and transparent monitoring system that ensures the policy/programme achieves the intended purpose.

Contribution of NGOs:

- **Advocating:** monitor and voice whether the policy initiative reached the intended beneficiaries and had the intended outcome for society
- **Expertise and advice:** gather evidence or research on the policy's impact; includes think-tanks and research institutes
- **Service provision:** responsibility to monitor the effects of the programme in terms of quality, sustainability, effectiveness and real case examples
- **Watchdog function:** a priority role in monitoring effects of the policy, to ensure that the intended objectives are achieved

Responsibilities of public authorities:

- **Information sharing:** Provide information on current policy status
 - **Responsiveness:** Listen, and react to specific points raised by NGOs and civil society
- Useful tools and mechanisms:
- **Information:**
 - Open and free access to information** on policy progress

Evidence gathering to collect cases and statistics on project delivery
Evaluation of policy and its impact through conferences and reporting
Independent **research studies** to draw out key lessons

- **Consultation:**

Feedback mechanisms to follow progress such as polls, web surveys or questionnaires

- **Dialogue:**

Work group or committee consisting of NGOs (both users and providers) in charge of the monitoring and evaluation of the policy initiative

- **Partnership:**

Work group or committee consisting of the NGO and public authorities coming together in a strategic partnership to monitor and evaluate the policy initiative

6. Reformulation

The knowledge gained from assessing the policy implementation, coupled with evolving needs in society, often require a reformulation of policy. This must be based on access to information and opportunities for dialogue to identify needs and initiatives. This reformulation allows for the initiation of a new cycle of decision-making.

Contributions of NGOs:

- **Advocating:** lobby for renewal of policy by expressing limitations in or side-effects of the current policy, to meet the needs of users or citizens
- **Expertise and advice:** conduct research and analysis to identify gaps in the current policy initiative and provide rationale for reformulation
- **Innovation:** develop new approaches to tackle the relevant policy issue; this can be a key element in policy renewal
- **Service provision:** identify obstacles and gather evidence to illustrate evolving needs that require a reformulation of policy

Responsibilities of public authorities:

- **Information sharing:** provision of information on possible review of a policy and their perception of changes needed in policy
- **Procedures:** provide clear, open and accessible processes for participation
- **Resource provision:** enable and support the active participation of civil society
- **Responsiveness:** listen and act on input from NGOs

Useful tools and mechanisms:

- **Information:**

Open and free access to information providing evaluations, study results and other evidence about the existing policy

- **Consultation:**

Conference or meeting to set out next steps planned by public authority

Online consultation to gather civil society views on how to follow-up policy/project

- **Dialogue:**

Seminars and deliberative forums to involve interested stakeholders in developing new directions in policy field e.g. World café, open space, other brainstorming methods

- **Partnership:**

Work group or committee where NGOs form an expert group jointly with other stakeholders and public authorities with the purpose of recommending a revised policy

IV.iii Cross-cutting tools and mechanisms for civil participation

There are certain tools or mechanisms gathered from across Europe during the consultation for the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation that provide cross-cutting support to participation throughout the whole decision-making process:

1. E-participation

E-tools offer great potential for improving democratic practice and participation of an organised civil society. They can largely contribute to the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of institutions, as well as to the promotion of citizens' engagement and to increasing empowerment and the accessibility and inclusiveness of the democratic process. In order to fully benefit from their potential, e-tools should be integrated by all participants of the decision making, including the authorities at all levels and organised civil society.

2. Capacity-building for participation

It is essential to develop the capacity and skills of local, regional and national NGOs so that they may be actively involved in policy formulation, project development and service provision. Capacity-building can also include training seminars to improve the understanding of the reciprocal roles of NGOs and public authorities in this engagement, as well as exchange programmes to facilitate the understanding of each other's realities.

3. Structures for cooperation between NGOs and public authorities

In order to facilitate the relationship between public authorities and NGOs, a number of countries have developed coordinating bodies. These include: government bodies such as a contact person for civil society in each ministry or a central coordination body as a single interlocutor; joint structures such as multi-stakeholder committees, work groups, expert councils and other advisory bodies (permanent or ad-hoc); or NGO alliances/coalitions which pool resources and develop joint positions.

4. Framework documents on cooperation between NGOs and public authorities

In many European countries framework agreements have been developed to outline undertakings, roles and responsibilities and procedures for cooperation. These documents lay out a clear basis for the relationship and thereby facilitate ongoing dialogue and mutual understanding between NGOs and public authorities. They include bilateral agreements with parliament or government, strategy documents for cooperation and official programmes for cooperation, adopted by public authorities.

V. Matrix of Civil Participation

In order to illustrate and clarify the relationship, the matrix below visualises the steps of the political decision-making process and their connection with levels of participation. It is based on good practices and examples from civil society across Europe and is intended to offer inspiration for action and strengthen interaction between NGOs and public authorities.

At each stage in the decision-making process (from left to right) there are different levels of NGO participation (from bottom to top). It is envisaged that the steps in the political decision-making process can be applied to any context in Europe, local to national. As has been explained, the levels of participation at each point in the decision-making process may vary from low to high and it is intended that the suggested tools are used as ways to implement each type of participation.

This matrix may be used in a wide variety of ways, such as mapping the levels of engagement of civil society in any given policy process; assessing NGO participation at any particular point of a process; or as a practical resource for NGO planning of policy activities. This is not intended as an exhaustive list and it may be adapted to many more uses.

The matrix illustrates the inter-related elements of participation in the decision-making process. This example shows how the useful tools mentioned above may achieve the intended level of participation at each step in the decision-making process.

Partnership	Work group or committee	Co-drafting	Joint decision-making Co-decision making	Strategic partnerships	Work groups or committee	Work groups or committee
Dialogue	Hearings and public forums Citizens' forums and future councils Key government contact	Hearings and Q&A panels Expert seminars Multi-stakeholder committees and advisory bodies	Open plenary or committee sessions	Capacity building seminars Training seminars	Work groups or committee	Seminars and deliberative forums
Consultation	Petitioning Consultation online or other techniques	Hearings and Q&A panels Expert seminars Multi-stakeholder committees and advisory bodies	Open plenary or committee sessions	Events, conferences, forums, seminars	Feedback mechanisms	Conferences or meetings Online consultation
Information	Easy and open information access Research	Open and free access to policy documents Website for key documents	Campaigning and lobbying	Open access to information Website for information access	Open access to information Evidence	Open access to information

Levels of participation	Campaigning and lobbying Website for key documents	Campaigns and lobbying Web casts Research input		E-mail alerts FAQ Public tendering procedures	gathering Evaluations Research studies	
	Steps in the political decision making process	Agenda setting	Drafting	Decision	Implementation	Monitoring

Appendix 6

Examples of current engagement with Local Government: Co. Carlow

it would be important to outline that the focus of local government is and always has been on the citizen - the ethos of local government is very much centred on "Working for the People with the People" and citizens are at the heart of and part of everything we do. Going back to the 1996 White Paper on Local Government Reform, known as "Better Local Government (BLG)" as referred to in attached paper, a lot of work has been carried out by the local government sector in enhancing and expanding citizen engagement.

Set out below are local examples of good practice relating to citizen engagement with local government in County Carlow:

- Concern was expressed as to what an active Citizen is, how well do they represent their community/area (especially an area outside their immediate area). What is expected of them and how do they link in? So hence clarity is required on what is meant by an "Active Citizen"
- There are weaknesses in forums such as the Community & Voluntary Forum, as through our years of experience we have noticed that it is very difficult to get people engaged in a generic format with vague and broad aims/objectives. People will engage on specific interests that are of relevance to them.
- Based on the local experience also, one area of concern in the context of citizen engagement, is the capacity of individuals and groups to partake in forums such as Strategic Policy Committees, Joint Policing Committees etc. Capacity building has to be a priority for active citizens, but again there needs to be clarity as to the role of an active citizen. Capacity building has to include more extensive knowledge of Local Government and the role of the citizen in its work.
- In relation to the previous point it was suggested that Local Authorities need to better sell the relevance of their work and the necessity of having citizens actively engage with them e.g Attend Area Committee Meetings, soon to be Municipal District Meetings
- Improve marketing and PR within the local government sector - upgrade packages and communication tools. Map Alerter / Text Alert currently used in Carlow Local Authorities and some of the other counties is an example of an innovative and effective communication tool
- Due to the increased centralisation of functions such as Higher Education Grants, Driver Licences etc. there is a concern that the citizen is becoming more isolated from local government
- It is suggested in the context of "Putting People First" and change management in the local government sector that to ensure emphasis is on the citizen/customer, a focus be placed on staff training. Identify skills of existing staff, up skill all staff in areas such as facilitation, advocacy, leadership and Community Development and provide ongoing professional development.

Examples of Carlow Local Authorities Engaging with Citizens (C&E perspective)

A model of Citizen Engagement is already established within Local Government through *Better Local Government* which was set up to expand the role of local authorities in community and enterprise and increase participation. It saw the development of Community & Enterprise Departments, which through various community initiatives have had positive community participation.

All of the initiatives hereunder would have embedded at their core, meaningful active participation and engagement with the relevant elements of the community and this engagement would have informed the focus, the direction and rolling out of these projects.

Carlow CDB and SIM

- Developed bid and secured Rural Development Programme for County Carlow
- Established and supporting Carlow Community & Voluntary Forum (set up to be the voice of the people)
- Developed bid and secured a County Childcare Programme for County Carlow
- Developed bid and secured Local Sports Partnership programme for County Carlow
- Developed bid and secured establishment of Carlow Volunteer Centre
- Establishment and operation of Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg (to ensure the voice of young people are heard)
- Developed and Established County Carlow Children & Young Peoples Services Committee
- Developed and implemented Interagency Traveller Strategy 2007-2009 & 2010 – 2012 (
- Developed & Implemented an Economic Development & integrated Marketing Strategy for County Carlow
- Progressed significant public investment – establishment of Business Parks in Carlow, Bagenalstown & Tullow
- Collaborative approach to attraction of Foreign Direct Investment – Merck Sharp & Dohme and UNUM
- Supported and worked with Institutions of Higher Education – IT Carlow and Carlow College
- Implementation of Carlow County Tourism Strategy & Improved Co-ordination of local tourism promotion
- Developed Tourism Product eg. VISUAL, Ducketts Grove, Oak Park Forest Park, Brownhill Dolmen
- Progressing Cultural Quarter: VISUAL / New County Museum; Eigse; Carlow College; Cathedral & Library
- Produced Directory of Indoor Facilities with community access

- Progressed Cohesion Process (integration of Rural Development & Social Inclusion Programmes)
- Supported Implementation of County Childcare Strategy
- Prepared Socio Economic Profile & LAPSIS (Local Anti-Poverty Social Inclusion Strategy for County Carlow)
- Progressed Rural Transport Initiative & Age Friendly County Initiative
- Developed & established CRISP (Carlow Rural Information Services Project) Centres throughout the County
- Delivery of RAPID Programme – significant investment in sports facilities, childcare and environmental improvements in RAPID areas (participation by citizens within less developed/marginalise communities)
- Developed and implemented of the Rohingya Resettlement Programme
- Developed New Start Carlow website
- Developed and implementing an Age Friendly County Strategy

Community Initiatives

Working with and empowering local communities and their substantial engagement through such projects as

- Carlow's Pride of Place,
- Litter League
- Co-operation Ireland Pride of Place
- Tidy Towns
- Entente Florale
- National Spring Clean
- Skips and Bins programme
- National Tree Week
- Local Agenda 21

Arts Section

- The wide consultation that took place for Music Generation 'Go Music' programme being designed around that local need
- Panchaea - mental health services users were fully part of a process and decision making around the shaping of that commission and outcomes etc.
- Artlinks - professional development services for artists is in response to the local needs of artists telling us what it is they want and need ie money, time, space to develop their professions
- Empowering local citizens through art - such as Youth Theatre, Youth Choirs, Senior Citizens Choirs
- Through the Arts Venue - VISUAL - Citizen engagement - space for expression - Voicebox new initiatives local people can engage with the space as a meeting place for exchange of ideas/interests/networking
- Arts Festival - Citizens engage with the place Carlow in an animated way - An Arts Festival brings to a town a sense of ownership, celebration, local involvement, being

a part of a community, sense of pride of the local artistic infrastructure - showcases its local artists

- We are at the cold face of engagement - what we do is totally driven by local engagement as a necessity!

Sports

Local Sports Partnership

- The LSP is 'needs based' rooted in community development principles, as stated in the strategic plan.
- All actions are based on identified need through research
- Certain target groups are involved through local agencies they engage with and representative forums e.g. we have reps from Youth Services, Comm & Vol Forum, Older Peoples Network, etc.
- This consultation with the public is carried out through interviews, questionnaires, online surveys, feedback forms, target group meetings and public meetings.
- Participants are engaged in the design, delivery and evaluation of all projects.
- The board of management consists of community representatives in addition to agency and local government reps.
- Community reps on the board are recruited through adverts in paper requesting short submissions from people on why they would like to join board, the board has the final say on who is recruited. Some community reps are actively targeted based on background and experience.
- The LSP offers training to supports volunteers based on current needs, on an ongoing basis, to upskill and empower.
- Communication and marketing is key

FAI / Carlow Local Authorities

6 Key Areas/Partners that include participation, inclusion, education, development....

- Carlow Regional Youth Services
 - (After School, Community Club Link, Education)
 - (Carlow Town, Hacketstown, Tullow)
- Kilkenny / Carlow ETB
 - (Project FUTSAL, Inter Reg, Muine Bheag Vocational School)
- FAI Football For All (Disability Football)
 - (Skills Base Carlow, NLN Graiguecullen)

- FAI Intercultural
 - (Show Racism the Red Card)
 - (UEFA Fare Week "Football Against Racism in Europe" Bishop Foley N.S. Wed 16th Oct, St Fiaccs N.S. Wed 23rd Oct)

- FAI Club / League Support
 - (Education, Coaching, Child Welfare, Garda Vetting, Club Development, Fundraising, Camps)

- FAI Schools
 - (Post and Primary Schools support and participation)

Finally, there are many publications, particularly by the IPA on this subject for example "Local Authorities More Than Service Providers" ;"Changing Local Government" and "Local Government in Ireland Inside Out" which includes information on Active Citizenship, Participation and Representative Democracy.

Peace III Good Practice Examples of Citizen engagement with Local government: Co. Cavan.

Cavan Women's network – Breffni Belles

As a result of the EU Peace III funding the Cavan Co Council Networking and Good relations Partnership deliveries worked with representatives from a wide range of women's groups representing the different geographic regions of the County, different cultures, ages and religions. This project aimed to build and support the skills and strengths of many of the members of these groups in order to build an effective women's network to promote and support Peace and Reconciliation work.

Breffni Belles progressed to applying and securing funding from Peace III, phase II to build and strengthen their network. Their work and commitment was recognised in 2012 when Marian Harkin, MEP, invited four members of the Breffni Belles, Cavan Women's Network to attend a conference on 'Women's involvement in Public Life' at the European parliament in Brussels. This invitation to Brussels was a testament to the progress and commitment of the Network members.

The Cavan women's Network is led by a committee of 14 women and the group aim to represent the needs of all women in the County. Members of the network visited the Dail in

March 2012 to lobby on the subject of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which was about including more women in peace negotiations, in decision making and influential roles in society as public representatives, more women in peacekeeping and protecting women from violence during armed conflict.

The Cavan Women's Network, have over the past months been working to develop a plan to continue their work over the coming years. A member of the committee has been co-opted onto the Cavan Peace III Peace and Reconciliation Partnership board.

Cavan County Council Peace III Peace & Reconciliation Partnership Board:

The County Cavan development board established the Cavan County Council Peace & Reconciliation partnership in early 2008 for the purpose of developing proposals and actions to implement Theme 1.1 building positive relations at a local level in County Cavan. The Cavan County Council Peace partnership had its first meeting on the 6th March 2008. The majority of members of the Cavan Co Council Peace III Partnership are members of the County Development Board with three exceptions. These three individuals were co-opted onto the Peace Partnership to represent the interests of some of the Peace III target groups, namely Protestants, Ethnic minorities and women. The Cavan Co Council Peace partnership is chaired by the County Manager.

The overall aim of the Peace III programme is 'to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation'. The Cavan County Development Board through its work identified a shared vision for Cavan in 2012. Their vision is broadly similar to that held by the children of the county which is as follows:

'Cavan as a county 'which is socially very active, environmentally friendly, economically vibrant, and inclusive of all members of the County.'

The County Cavan Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan aims to support the achievement of this vision through the implementation of a number of aims and objectives. The overall aim of the Plan is to 'Build positive relations at a local and indeed a cross border level through challenging attitudes to sectarianism and racism; to increase levels of interaction and engagement between different communities, groups and areas; to support conflict resolution and mediation work at a local level within the county and ultimately to promote reconciliation within the county and in the wider region'

The key to success of the Peace III Peace & Reconciliation Partnership Board to date has been the partnership approach. By adopting this approach the County Council Peace Partnership was able to embed itself within Cavan County and make a significant impact.

More than 2,500 participants have been involved with the Cavan County Councils Partnership delivery programmes.

Cavan Comhairle na nÓg:

Comhairle na nÓg is a forum for structured input into decision-making by children and young people in the development of local services and policies to be supported and resourced appropriately by relevant statutory and voluntary organisations.

Cavan Comhairle in 2011/2012 worked across four themes – namely, the promotion of youth participation in four cultural areas; trad music, dance, visual arts and the Irish language.

Cavan Comhairle's main theme for 2013 is youth mental health and following the recent announcement that Cavan was to host the International Compromise Rules - Ireland V Australia in October 2013 Cavan County Council recognised the opportunity to work with the Comhairle Na nÓg youth committee to explore how the Aussie Rules event can be used as an effective mechanism to promote positive mental health to the young people of Cavan and our neighbouring Counties. This initiative was in line with the Comhairle Na nÓg development fund. Cavan Comhairle na nÓg received €20,000 for the year 2013 and the main focus of the application was to address Youth Mental Health, this topic was chosen because during the elections the young people were also asked to vote in secret for the top two issues that came up for them during the 'Open space' workshops. These votes were collated on a county wide basis and three of the top five issues were related to mental health.

T

he International compromise rules was a unique opportunity to maximise the promotion of positive mental health of our young people. This is seen as an opportunity to promote the work of Comhairle Na nÓg members, especially as the 2012 road shows and AGM heard numerous Comhairle members speak of the need to get involved in campaigns and events at a national level.

The International compromise rules festival ran from Thursday 17 October 2013 to Sunday 20 October 2013.

Comhairle Na nÓg AGM took place on Friday 18 October and the mental health conference was on Saturday 19 October 2013.

Comhairle Na nÓg member's involvement:

Organise the comhairle Na nÓg AGM and a Conference focusing on Mental health during the International compromise rules festival. Cavan Co Council provided a range of supports that equipped the Comhairle Na nÓg members in Cavan with the necessary skills to

participate on the steering committee for the International compromise rules festival.

The role of the steering committee:

- organise a positive mental health conference on Saturday 19 Oct 2013 (AM)
- Decide on the final line up of speakers
- Select/decide format to choose the 2000 young people to attend the mental health conference, these 2000 young people will be selected from the 6000 young people that attended the Ireland V Australia game.

This was a unique opportunity as the International compromise rules came to Cavan for the first time. It also provided a fantastic opportunity for wider engagement and cross-community and cross-border collaboration between Cavan county council, Cavan comhairle Na nÓg and Cavan GAA and all our sister organisations in our neighbouring counties.

Cavan Co Council Community & Enterprise – Cavan schools programme: -Castlesaunderson International scouting Centre.

Cavan Community & Enterprise section in partnership with the Cavan GAA delivered a number of workshops to 500 young people from second level schools throughout Cavan. The workshops provided the opportunity for the young people to meet the Ireland and Australian teams and address topics on racism and respect.

The Taste of Cavan – A Cavan Co Council event in Partnership with Cavan ICA (Irish Country Woman’s Assoc.), Cavan institute and IFA (Irish Farmer’s Assoc.). This event attracted over 75 exhibition stands and over 20,000 people attended.

Dublin City Council and new forms of Citizen Engagement

Dublin City Council has been developing and trialling new forms of citizen engagement over the past three years. The Studio, an in-house innovation unit, was established to look at how we can work collaboratively with citizens and staff to deliver on ideas that are new to the City or to the Council.

Street Conversations process

This open consultation process was designed to engage with citizen's in a more informal, open and engaging way. It is particularly useful process to undertake very early on proposed new policies and projects. City Council staff working on a topic benefit from hearing directly from a wide range of people and not just those who attend public meeting or respond to official consultations. It has been encouraging that staff from a number of departments including the City Planner have agreed to partake in these processes. Views when gathered at this stage can really feed into a project or policy development before options get narrowed by officials and interest groups. The methodology has the benefit of also eliciting positive feedback on some services as well as indicating issues of real concern to the public. The City Council has used this methodology on a diverse range of policies and services.

- Grafton Street Project 2011
- Dublin City Public Realm Policy 2011
- Mountjoy Square 2012
- Docklands Street Conversation 2012
- Aging in Dublin (with Aging Well Network) 2013
- Play in Sandymount 2013
- Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin 2013

Most of these reports can be downloaded from the [Studio Blog](#).

The costs are relatively low. Up to 500 conversations can be gathered in 2-5 days depending on the number of staff assigned . The Studio has completed a [Toolkit](#) for the process to allow this method to be replicated by other City Council departments and other public bodies.

Co-creation processes:

For Projects: The City Council has involved citizens in more detailed collaboration in the Grafton Street Project. Businesses and residents in Fade Street, Clarendon Street and subsequently the wider Grafton Street area were asked to participate in designing up options for the project. This led to a more flexible approach where stakeholders could interact with the design team, select materials and see proposed interventions trialled on location before permanent decisions made

For service change: The Studio is at a very early stage of involving citizens in the assessment and redesign of Council services. A selection of those who run events, marketing and film in various public locations were interviewed on their experience of the service. Out of this process a collaboration developed with one group of users to work together with staff on developing a prototype of a new booking service for filming in the City. The prototype is about to undergo a trial period with volunteers from the film industry.

Collaborative solution generation. The studio was interested in investigating to see how to obtain increased and more diverse involvement in designing solutions to complex issues facing the city. Their design methodologies are used frequently by the Institute without Boundaries (Toronto), Helsinki Design Lab, Mindlab (Copenhagen) and Nesta (UK). Changes in support structures for micro businesses offered an ideal topic. In July 2013 we ran an event called Startup City which involved 80 people from small businesses, state agencies, enterprise boards and Dublin City Council to actively design over a three day period solutions to 8 disparate and practical issues facing start-ups in Dublin. These proposals were presented back immediately to a panel chaired by the Dublin City Manager. Dublin City Council and its partner agencies are now developing up four of those proposals. Some entrepreneurs have also volunteered to be involved in the next stages. This intensive processes could be used to address other complex challenges facing the City

Social Media:

The Studio also uses social media as a method to communicate and engage with citizens via Twitter, Facebook, Studio Blog and YouTube. Over the next few months we will be investigating how to increase awareness of a range of City Council services and activities through twitter. This could be a variation of the #OurDay campaign run by local authorities in the UK. In December 2013, 3,500 UK local government staff members from multiple services sent nearly 11,000 tweets over 24 hours reaching 3 million people.

Other relevant citizen engagement methodologies used by the other sections within Dublin City Council

Your Dublin Your Voice is a survey run 3 times a year by the Office of Economy and International Relations in Dublin City which has a voluntary panel of over 4,500 participants. Each survey is on a different topic ranging from digital usage, through governance and public spaces.

Dublin City Council is now using a new online engagement tool *Citizen Space* which can be used for informal and formal consultation processes.

Participation by citizens and how we connect with our citizens: Co. Meath

- Over 150 people attended Information Event on **Winter Preparedness** in Nov 2011. (20 Councillors attended & 12 MCC staff). Attendees were from all parts of County Meath. 43 Community Groups signed Expression of Assistance Form confirming contact details and their availability to assist in an emergency. Feedback from attendees was very strong and covered such topics as flooding, winter road gritting (routes to be made public). **Community & Voluntary Steering Group** assisted at the event and continue to develop communications with new Groups in each electoral area.

- **Community & Voluntary Steering Group** - Over 30 community group members received **Defibrillator** training in recent months. This linkage was made following a request to the Civil Defence to roll out the training. A ripple effect has taken place in the communities who have AED machines, now having trained local people available to assist in the event of an emergency. Kells Town citizens will be next to get training.
- **Corporate Governance Community Information Evening** – 260 people attended Seminar in Solstice Theatre, Navan on 1st November 2012. Presentations given on all area re Corporate Governance.
- **Smoke Alarm Scheme** – annual distribution of Smoke Alarms to Vulnerable Households including specialised alarms for deaf and hard of hearing. Approx. 150 alarms each year since 2005.
- **Age Friendly Initiative – Trim Town** Steering Group now in place. 6 Groups of 10 citizens will take part in a Walkability Audit of the Town on Thurs. 17th October. They come from various backgrounds and are all volunteering to carry out the Audit on behalf of their fellow citizens. School students, members of the Active Retirement Group and Trim Tidy Town are just some of the volunteers assisting.
- **Age Friendly Initiative** – citizens who use the Flexibus rural transport service have recently engaged with a Needs Analysis of transport requirement for the County. Approx. 500 questionnaires have been completed at this stage. This analysis information is currently being assessed by NUI Maynooth and will form the basis for a report for the Transport Working Group of the Age Friendly Alliance.
- **Age Friendly Initiative** – Community Volunteers trained by An Garda Síochána in a joint initiative as Crime Prevention Ambassadors to engage with older vulnerable members of the Community in their area – September 2013.
- **Community Database** – over 1,000 Community & Voluntary Groups on our database at present. Linkages can be with any one/many on any given piece of activity e.g. electoral area linkages have been made recently with regard to the overall Consultation for the East Meath Draft Development Plan. 20 community and voluntary groups from East Meath attended consultation meeting on 10th October. It is expected that many Groups will make a submission.
- **Comhairle na nÓg** – 3 members of the Comhairle na nÓg youth council (who reside in East Meath) attended consultation meeting re pre Draft of East Meath Development Plan on 10th October. They are preparing a written submission to the pre Draft Plan.
- **Comhairle na nÓg AGM** – over 120 young people engage with local Councillors and TDs/Senators at a Workshop annually
- **Kells Family Resource Centre** – engages with its community with many training courses, supports for families etc. and now has a staff member sitting on the County C & V Steering Group. It is a two way continuous communication and work stream and is an example of excellent community work in partnership with other agencies.
- **Trim Town Playground Application** – a community group of young parents in Trim were consulted prior to the application being made to the Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs. They made local representations, attended meetings and

continue to work in the community to garner support for the Project. Their needs and desire for a second playground for the town is very much part of the strength of the Application.

- **Anti-Litter League** - involves housing estates, villages, towns and voluntary groups. Runs for 6 weeks in March and April. In excess of 120 groups and probably well in excess of 1,200 volunteers.
 - **Spring Clean month** - April each year. In excess of 300 voluntary groups, individuals, etc. involved in An Taisce spring clean which is organised locally by Meath County Council
 - **Pride of Place (Local)** - in excess of 100 groups involved in Pride of Place competition and in enhancing their local communities
 - **Pride of Place (National)** - Co-Operation North---4 or 5 groups each year represent the county in an All-Ireland Pride of Place competition.
 - **Tidy Towns** - up to 25 towns and villages take part each year
-

Good practice of Citizen Engagement with Local Government: Co. Offaly

Offaly Community Forum represents 450 Community & Voluntary groups in Offaly. These groups range from Residents Associations & Community alert groups, Health & Family Support, Heritage & Environment, Women's Groups, Youth, Sports & Recreation, Community Development, the elderly & special interest groups. There has been an 80% increase in the membership of the Forum since Offaly County Council allocated a Community Forum Support Worker to work with the Forum.

In 2008 the Local Authority prioritised the role of a Community Forum Support Worker which is a half time position within the Local Authority in Offaly to co-ordinate and promote citizen engagement with the Local Authority. This role is still in place.

The Community Forum has elected representatives on thirteen decision making bodies in Offaly. Council Committees where there are community representatives are the Planning SPC, Housing and Cultural Services SPC, Transportation SPC, Environment SPC, the County JPC and the Heritage Forum. Other Committees with Community representation by Offaly Community Forum include the CEB, County Childcare Committee, Offaly Local Development Company, Midland Regional Drugs Taskforce and the County Development Board, including SIM.

Structure

The Management Committee & the representatives on decision making bodies (DMB's) are elected by the full membership of the Forum. The Management Committee meets bimonthly & is made up of 14 people representing the 4 electoral areas (2 from each electoral area) and 6 members from specific community interest groups. Feedback, issues and concerns are discussed at each meeting of the Forum and where necessary Focus

groups/ Issue groups are set up in response to a community need. There is an agreed work plan for the Forum each year which is submitted to the DELG for approval.

Representatives who attend meetings of decision making bodies in Offaly report to the Management Committee at each meeting. Prior to 2012 the Forum Committee met each month, to save on costs the Committee now meet bimonthly. Area Fora meetings take place quarterly in the 4 Electoral areas of the County to discuss local issues. These issues are then brought to the Forum Management Committee for consideration or action. Members of the Management Committee or the Forum Support Worker attend the Area Fora meetings to feedback to the wider community on the work of the Forum.

Examples of engagement

The Director of Services meets annually with representatives of the Community Forum to update them on issues and policy changes.

At Area Committee level, Community Forum representatives have attended these meetings in all four electoral areas and engaged at this level.

Local Authority staff are invited to Community Forum meetings as issues arise for clarification and discussion and feedback from the community e.g. Winter Road Safety programme for discussion with Director of Service and discussions with the Executive Engineer and Senior Engineers on Public lighting reporting etc.

When Council Departments want to liaise or consult with community groups on planning issues, roads consultation, Heritage Plan and Arts Plan etc., the membership of the Forum are chosen to link with the Department and provide feedback on the relevant issues e.g.

Planning consultation with the Community on designating world heritage sites in Offaly and Roads Dept. on certain infrastructure projects.

The Forum also was the key organiser of a community consultation with the Planning Department on the Edenderry Local Area Plan.

As a result of the issue that arose to promote positive mental health at Area Fora level, the Forum prioritized promoting positive mental health in the Community for the past 2 years. This initiative has been supported by the Local Authority in organizing Offaly Mental Health Talk Week in 2011 and 2012 providing PR, venues via the network of libraries in the County and staff resources. The Forum has co-ordinated ten organisations to provide 50/60 events in the Community for Offaly Mental Health Talk Week. This is an excellent collaborative approach to supporting wellness in the community when agencies work together via a Community Forum led approach.

The Forum operates two thematic networks namely Offaly Tidy Towns Network and Offaly Community Watch. The Tidy Towns Network consists of the 22 community groups. The Local Authority arranges quarterly network workshops, field trips, provides support in group plans and issues arising. There is a cross section team of OCC staff who respond to the Network ranging from Heritage, Architecture, Community and Enterprise, Environment, Roads and Engineering staff. This is an effective example of citizen engagement with great response from staff to empower communities. The Council also supported 7 groups this year to complete Biodiversity Studies as a joint OCC/ OLDC funding initiative.

The Community Watch Network represents over 70 Community Alert/ Neighbourhood Watch groups in Offaly. It meets 4 times a year with Council staff and the Gardai. Items of

public concern are addressed at these network meetings. Dialogue is open and informative by all parties present. The Chairperson of the Community Watch is now a member of the County JPC thus allowing a direct feedback mechanism from the Community Watch network to the Local Authority and decision makers at JPC level.

Fire prevention in the home and supports for the elderly- The Local Authority provides smoke alarms to vulnerable household. There has been a big demand for smoke alarms in Offaly Co.Co. as a result of Forum meetings promoting this scheme via Community Alert groups /Saorview meetings etc. & local councillors Via the Community Watch Network over 190 houses were surveyed for the Warmer Homes Scheme in Offaly in 2012 There has also been an increase in the number of Community Alert groups in Offaly, with twelve additional groups set up since Community Watch was established. The Forum is the main instigator of Offaly County Council signing up to the Age Friendly Counties Programme in 2013 thus emphasising the support that the Forum receives from the Local Authority to develop community led initiatives.

The Forum also plays a role acting as a key information resource between the Local Authority and the community. The Forum Facebook page is used regularly to update the community on Council funding, road closures and Council events taking place.

Comhairle na nÓg

Offaly Comhairle na nÓg links with 11 Secondary Schools, 5 Youth Projects and 54 Youth Clubs in Offaly each year. Representation on the Comhairle is sought from all the areas. Comhairle also regularly updates the adult volunteers in the community and youth sector of Departmental funding and information updates.

The youth membership of Comhairle are very active in the community researching youth topics, advocating for youth and are included in the County Development Plan as a key consultative body for the county.

Offaly Comhairle na nÓg is the recognized Youth Council for Offaly. The purpose of the Council is to identify youth issues and engage with adult decision makers to rectify these issues. There are 20 teenagers on this Council who meet fortnightly from all areas in Offaly. The 2009/2011 Comhairle na nÓg were the driving force in securing a €250,000 funded Jigsaw project to support young people's mental health in Offaly. This was a community bid to secure a Jigsaw service for Offaly from Headstrong the National Youth Mental Health Organisation.

The Executive of Offaly County Council, the Chairperson of the CDB and Director of Service are regular attendees at Comhairle events and National Comhairle events. This allows for, and builds a greater two way information flow between the active citizenship of youth and the Local Government structure.

Joint Policing Committee: South Dublin County

Record of Meetings held in 2012

South Dublin County Joint Policing Committee hold four meetings each year

10th February 2012	25th May 2012	14th September 2012	23rd November 2012
22nd February 2013	24th May 2013	6th September 2013	29th November 2013

Public Meetings

These are arranged through the various Local Policing Forum steering committees whose membership comprises one Senior Garda – normally at Superintendent level, one Senior LA Official – me in all 3 and one local elected member for the area. The rest of the committee is formed from a representative from the relevant estates.

South Dublin County Joint Policing Committee set up three Local Policing Fora which are located in Tallaght, Clondalkin and North Clondalkin. The public meetings are organised by the Local Policing Fora and supported by the Joint Policing Committee. The relevant Superintendents/Chief Superintendents with Inspectors and Community Garda attend these meetings together with the County Council Director of Housing and staff in the Housing and Community Departments. This commitment by the most senior Gardai and Local Authority officials has been recognised by the Local Policing Fora members and the local community. This also allows the most senior staff in both organisations to hear the difficulties, fears and concerns first hand from residents. The Local Policing Fora also allow for input and discussion with other local safety initiatives such as the Dublin Bus/LUAS Fora, events/festivals, programmes such as tidy towns, clean ups etc

Generally the public meetings involve a presentation by me and the Garda Super, break out into groups with feedback to the general meeting at the end and any queries that can be dealt with there and then are and otherwise for report back at next meeting

Garda and LA officials stay back afterwards to deal with confidential queries from attendees

They are effective in offering a voice for communities – have their issues responded to and they realise that many gains can be achieved by their attendance

It is very much a joint effort with Gardai and local communities

Reports from public and management meetings have been presented to all meetings of the JPC

Public meetings were held as follows in 2012 and to date in 2013

Area 2012	Date 2012	Area 2013	Date 2013
Clondalkin	19 th January 2012	Tallaght Fettercairn	29 th January
Tallaght - Jobstown	25 th January 2012	Clondalkin	7 th March
Tallaght - Killinarden	24 th April 2012	Tallaght Brookfield	23 rd April
Clondalkin	17 th May 2012	Clondalkin	20 th June
Tallaght - Killinarden	27 th June 2012	Tallaght Brookfield	23 rd October
North Clondalkin	18 th September 2012		
Tallaght - Fettercairn	9 th October 2012		
Clondalkin	8 th November 2012		

Citizen Engagement: Co. Waterford

1. Deise Link Rural Transport Service and Waterford County Council

Déise Link is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, having charitable status, operating public transport services under the Rural Transport Programme. It operates under the aegis of Waterford County Council. With an operational area consisting of all of County Waterford, Déise Link operates both fully scheduled and more flexible door to door transport services in rural areas that best meets the community's needs. The services allow passengers access a range of services and provide an essential social link for rural residents.

The Board of Directors includes councillors representing their electoral areas; Community Councils; ICA; IFA; Macra na Feirme; Society of St Vincent de Paul; Bus Éireann and Waterford County Development Board.

The Board is responsible for the development and delivery of services in partnership with all stakeholders. All agencies and organisations represented on the Board have a clear set of values that have emerged in the course of consultations with and representation on the Board from local communities. A key tenet of the vision for the project is community ownership and this is reflected in the focus on the need for community representation at Board level.

Community representation and participation in decision-making processes actively strengthens the role of the Board. Participation is matched by a partnership between the agencies and organisations working with communities in Waterford.

The Deise Link structure facilitates access by community representatives, and an integrated approach to planning on behalf of communities with the wider Community & Enterprise

Team including the Community Forum, Tourism, Sports Partnership and Comhairle na nÓg. Working within the structure of Waterford County Council has given rise to inclusion in policy-making bodies such as Strategic Policy Committees. This has been of considerable benefit to the overall objective in terms of administrative and financial support and the communities represented in networking across the Local Authority's areas of responsibility.

2. County Waterford Community Forum

The Mission Statement of the Forum is *"to promote inclusive community participation in the economic, social, and cultural development of County Waterford"*.

It was set up in 2001 by the Waterford County Development Board (under Waterford county Council) to ensure that the voice of the community and voluntary sector is represented in the economic, social and cultural development of the county. It is a non political organisation that enables community and voluntary organisations across the county to voice issues and concerns relating to the development of their communities. It consists of a network of groups and organisations which aims to build linkages, consult and be consulted on topics relating to the development of County Waterford. It acts as a platform for exchanging information, sharing experience and working collectively.

340+ registered Member Groups make up this network, representing extensive interests. All eligible community, voluntary and local development groups are invited to register as members of the Community Forum in their Electoral Area.

3. County Waterford Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairlí na nÓg (youth councils) were established in 2002 by the 34 City and County Development Boards (CDBs) in each local authority area, as part of the National Children's Strategy (2000).

Comhairlí na nÓg provide a forum for children and young people to discuss local and national issues of relevance to them. Delegates from Comhairlí na nÓg are elected to represent their local area at the annual Dáil na nÓg.

Comhairlí na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg are recognised as the official structures for participation by children and young people in the development of policies and services.

Many CDBs have established regular sessions of Comhairlí na nÓg which link with the adult City and County Councils. In these CDB areas, Comhairlí na nÓg interact with policy makers to ensure that the views of young people are included in shaping policies and services.

In the case of Co Waterford, the local Comhairle na nÓg interacts regularly with the elected council and brings matters affecting young people in the county to the attention of councillors. Indeed there are a number of elected members on the Comhairle Steering Committee.

Why is social media important to us?

Social Media tools offer us a new way of communicating. We need to use them well and understand this is a new type of relationship between officialdom and the ordinary citizen. The citizen can control much more of the interaction than in traditional communication routes. By subscribing to news feeds, blogs or alerts **citizens are the ones who choose to keep themselves informed**. This means local authorities should ensure that what they

publish through social media is usable, jargon-free, appropriate, timely and valuable to the citizen.

Waterford County Council uses a variety of Twitter and Facebook 'Voices' to:

- Interact and develop new relationships with our customers, partners and suppliers
- Get input from customers on service developments
- Improve customer service
- Accelerate problem solving
- Encourage innovation through collaboration with third parties and industry experts
- Manage our reputation

We train staff to understand how this collaborative and innovative way of working can help communicate more effectively with citizens and encourage them to.

- Publish emergency alerts for roads and water outages
- Identify crucial closing dates for participation or submissions
- Respond to queries, comments and complaints
- Inform citizens of new or developing services, particularly in the Tourism/Visitor industry.

Facebook Voices

Waterford County Council, Tourism, Library Service, Archive and Family History, Community Forum, Environment, Sean Kelly Tour, Heritage, Waterford Gathering, Comeraghs Wild, County Childcare, Go Dungarvan (Smarter Travel), Garden Trail, Rural Transport, Oifigeach Gaeilge Phort Lairge.

Twitter Voices

Waterford County Council, Tourism, Library Service, Garden Trail, Comeraghs Wild

Sectoral Response

Local Authorities are relatively new to using social media voices and we need to develop a forward-thinking, flexible, sectoral response to provide a consistent service nationally. At the moment, Local Authority use is patchy, reliant on individuals and poorly understood by some staff, though many staff experience social media through personal use. The distinction between official use and personal use needs to be identified.

The sector should understand the choice to participate lies in the social media communities and needs to reflect their interests, without excluding others.

Mobile technologies are also driving the communication trend away from websites and towards social media.

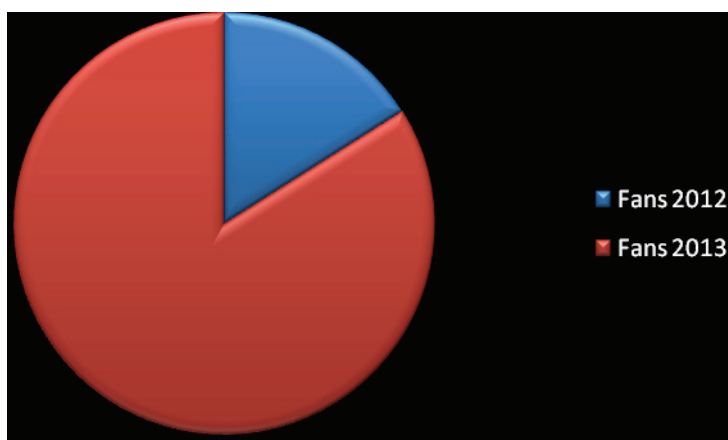
Social Media Analytics

The sector needs to decide how it will benchmark, measure and analyse social media use to provide a ROI for Local Authorities and citizens. Below are our analytics comparing growth in followers and fans from 2012 to latest figures (Q3) 2013.

Facebook Fans

Our combined fans from all our accounts have increased from 3,786 in 2012 to 19,817 by Q3 2013 - **an increase of 423%**

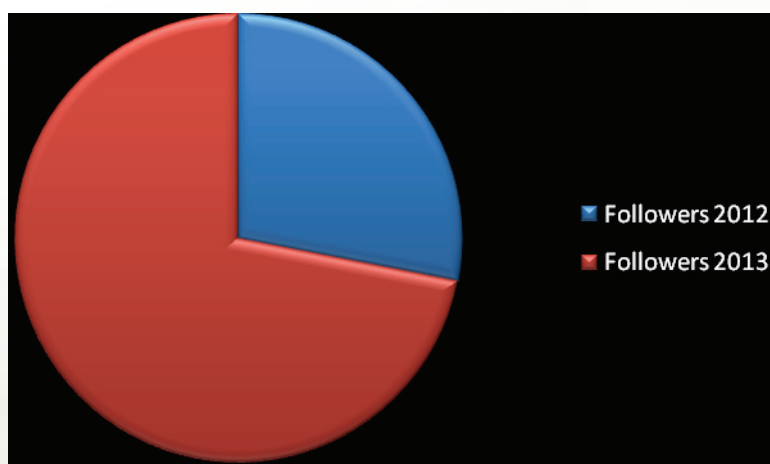
We published 684 Facebook Posts from Q1 to Q3 2013



Twitter Followers

Combined followers from all our accounts have increased from 2,313 in 2012 to 5,933 by Q3 2013 – **an increase of 307%**

We published 865 Tweets from Q1 to Q3 2013



Community Engagement: Co. Tipperary

Section	Code	Plan/Project/Activity	Who was involved (voluntary only)	Means of engaging people
		Statutory Requirements are colour coded G for Green: Non Statutory Requirement are colour coded B for Blue		
Community & Enterprise	G	County Development Board: - deals with the overall strategic issues facing county . Responsible for preparing County Development Strategy	Community and Voluntary Forum including non-governmental organisations in the county - Local Development Company, Irish Farmers Association, Representative from environmental pillar; Representative from the union sector, Representatives from the Business Sector; Public Representatives.	Public Meetings, Workshops held; Written submissions invited, . One-to-one meetings held with interested parties. Mail shots; seminars; questionnaires; focus groups etc used to get input at different stages of the delivery of the county development strategy. Sub Groups of CDB fed into this Strategy and they also contain voluntary/community representatives broader than the CDB structure (Economic Programme Management Group; The LA21 Programme Management Group; The Cultural Programme Management Group and Social Inclusion Programme Management Group

Community & Enterprise	<p>B</p> <p>3 RAPID Towns (CLONMEL, Carrick, Tipperary). Significant work was completed as part of RAPID process to support the development of community representation structures in the RAPID towns. Each of the 3 projects were under the council remit and were taken with identifying the issues, identifying solutions and implementing the plan drawn up</p>	<p>Community Representatives on Each Area Implementation Team (AIT). Five Task Groups established in each of the three areas with a number of community representatives on each: Physical and Environmental, Family & Youth, Education, Employment; and Health. Rapid Areas covered a population of approx 11,000 people in South Tipperary.</p>	<p>Open public meetings; One to one meetings of community Representatives with RAPID coordinator. Plan For Real Community Consultation was one example of the inclusive efforts to work in partnership with the community. Regular AIT meetings and active support provided to community representatives to input actively into meetings.</p>
Community & Enterprise	<p>B</p> <p>Comhairle na nÓG: Council support development of Comhairle na nÓG which is the representative group for young people in the county – The council chair the Comhairle steering group and co-ordinate the finance.</p> <p>Structure used to facilitate input from young people into policies (County Playground Development Policy; Integrated Teenspace Strategy for the County; Youth Mental Health Policy; Children Services Plan). Also used as opportunity for young people to raise issues to be addressed in new policies.</p>	<p>Comhairle na nÓg has over 120 young people involved directly. An elected group of 30 young people to feed into decision making structures on a monthly basis each year. The representatives are drawn from youth groups, schools and youth projects across the county.</p> <p>Particular effort is made to engage marginalised youths into the Comhairle and this is done with the support of the Regional Youth Groups</p>	<p>Young people feed into relevant council policies or programmes through Comhairle through direct consultation by the sections. They attend council meeting annually and CDB /SIM meetings annually allowing them to feed into the council or CDB the important issues facing young people.</p> <p>Examples of youth input into policies include the County Playground Development Strategy; The Integrated Teenspace Strategy for the County; Youth Mental Health Policy; Children Services Plan etc. Also used as opportunity for young people to raise issues to be considered by the Council in any new</p>

Community & Enterprise	B	Economic Programme Management Group of County Development Board - deals with broader economic policies not within the remit of the LA ("The Interagency Innovation and Enterprise Strategy ") and rolls out initiatives that are interagency based (such as development of the Ballingarrane Research & Development Enterprise Unit)	Community & Voluntary Forum Representatives; Business Representatives;	policy areas to be developed. Regular meetings examining economic issues. Forum to raise economic concerns and table them for discussion. Forum to respond to emerging issues.
Community & Enterprise	B	SIM - deal with all issues with a social inclusion focus. it is a sub group of the CDB and feeds into the decision making process of the CDB where social inclusion issues are involved	SIM has many sub groups all with appropriate community and voluntary representatives from their respective sectors: Age Friendly County (Elderly Fora) ; Disability Forum; STAN – Mental Health; Connecting Youth group: Youth Mental Health Group: Family Support Sub group : Free from Harm Sub-Group: Tipperary Music Education Partnership; Traveller Interagency Group; etc	Meetings, consultation papers where relevant, working directly on a one to one basis with interest groups. Issue topics held where relevant representative is given space at a meeting to raise an issue particular to them (eg. disability) and then actions are drawn up around this to address the concern by the various agencies (Disability Action Plan)

Community & Enterprise	<p>B</p> <p>County Development Board Local Agenda 21/REAL Communities programme has developed citizen participation programmes over a number of years. REAL communities participation programme - interagency project to support the development and participation of selected communities</p>	<p>20 different community groups across county. Rolled out a new Irish project - civic engagement project with over 1000 participated from school. Volunteers from across the county involved in this project.</p>	<p>Training and further intensive programme focused on community participation and planning. Annual project with Volunteer centre on civic engagement project gave full access to many members of the public</p>
Community & Enterprise	<p>B</p> <p>Policies and initiatives developed by the Economic and Planning Strategic Policy Committee:</p> <p>Examples include "Sustaining and Growing Retail Activity"; "Tourism Product Development and Marketing Strategy 2007 - 2014"; "The Renewable Energy Strategy"; and initiatives such as "The Commercial Incentive Fund"; and "The Retail Promotion Fund"</p>	<p>Community and Voluntary Forum representative on SPC. Other stakeholders including all agencies and non-governmental organisations in the county - Irish Farmers Association, Representative from environmental interest group; Construction Industry Federation (Business Representative); Representative from the union sector.</p> <p>Example - Retail Action Plan - Business and traders across South Tipperary engaged in a consultative and participative process to establish current gaps and issues and identify proposed actions . Close partnership with the Community & voluntary Forum enabled the community sector to input in the</p>	<p>Regular meetings examining economic issues. Forum to raise economic concerns and table them for discussion. Forum to respond to emerging issues.</p> <p>Sub-committees established to work on particular items (such as Retail document etc) and special interests groups invited to participate and input into policy process.</p> <p>Implementation of particular items overseen by appropriate interested stakeholders (i.e. retail actions overseen by a Retail Forum in each town which is made up of trader representatives)</p>

Community & Enterprise	B	Retention of Rail Services Initiative - Negotiated marketing campaign with Irish Rail and circulated promotional material via community groups and business sector. Worked with retail sector to develop promotional initiatives using rail (golden oldies package)	Strategic Policy Committee for economic and forward planning with members of the retail sector, chambers, local councillors and community representative. .	context of the more rural villages.	Discussion and circulation via email. Final collation of concerns from the wider community and submit to the organisation in order to campaign for retention of services. Agreed a marketing campaign with Irish Rail to promote services and encourage usage.
Community & Enterprise	B	National Basic Bank Account Consultation	Community and Voluntary Sector: Family Resource Centres, Partnership Company and Leader Companies, Youth groups,		Co-ordinate consultation in south Tipperary to identify concerns and submit views on behalf of the county.

			general public and credit unions.	
County Council	B	Delegations attending council meeting - with respect to particular issues (closing of roads; large scale developments; etc)	General Public; Interest Groups; Comhairle na nÓg; Volunteer Centres; Business Groups etc	Invitation to present to council issued to general public and interest groups. Councillors work directly with interest groups and bring forward areas of specific interest to attend.
County Council	B	Council representatives on statutory and voluntary external Boards	Leader Company, Childcare committee, Sports Partnership, Education Board, Comhairle na nÓg, Disability Group, Mental Health Group, Interagency Traveller Group; County Enterprise Board; Education Training Board; Adult Education Services; Regional Planning Group; Volunteer Board; Children Services Committee; Tourism Companies; Ring a Link Board; Tipperary Energy Agency; Festival Committees etc	Being a council representative on Community Board gives opportunity for the council rep to feed into issues /suggestions that may be relevant to the Council re citizens access to services for example
Museum	B	Museum Activities and Development Plan	Community and Voluntary Sector: youth groups, arts groups, general public, tourism groups, education interests	Museum Advisory Group – feed into Museum activities and Development Plan and Five year strategic management plan
Museum	B	Annual Activity Plan	Teachers, School completion Programme representatives.	Teachers Forum twice a year to feed into annual activity plan of the museum

Museum	B	Link with institutions WIT and LIT to identify their needs re the museum in their Heritage and arts management courses	Education Forums including students	Bi annually Museum Education Forum meeting.
Museum	B	Museum Outreach Programme	Disability, Youth, early school leavers	Museum Links with stakeholder group such as National learning network, Training Education Board & Clonmel Youth Training Centre re early school leavers re their needs in relation to the Museum and developing the Outreach Programme.
Museum	B	Workshop, exhibitions and Talks selection.	Visitors to events (general public) Target Groups in the community,	Museum regularly use Suggestions boxes, mail shots and evaluation sheets to get feedback and suggestions from services users and the general public from/and for workshops, exhibitions & talks
Museum	B	Promotion and marketing of the use of the museum to the population of South Tipperary.	General Public	Radio / local paper /national papers are widely used inviting people to participate
Clonmel Borough Council.	G	Statutory Consultation in relation to developing new housing schemes	Public , Representative members of the community & Voluntary Forum, External Reps participation on sub group (Economic and Forward Planning SPC); Business Communities - Chambers and Traders groups	Plans displayed publically and invitation issued through media and website to public to submit comment and view

Clonmel Borough Council.	G	Assessment of Housing Needs 3 year Plan	Consultation with Councillors and public including current applicants and open to new applicants. Advertising of process and call for submissions. Housing Strategic Policy Committee members including community and Voluntary representative, traveller representative and councillors input to the process	Consultation, Review, Call for submission. Applicants on current list input.
Clonmel Borough Council.	G	Development Plan - 2 year process	Residents, youth via Comhairle Na nÓg, community groups including allotment groups, artist groups and local festival committees, sporting organisations, specific estates in the community. Retail sector, business sector. An Taisce,	2 year process of consultation including workshops, advertising, social media and informal sessions with a variety of stakeholders
Clonmel Borough Council.	G	Extinguishing of Right of Ways	Usually at the request of a community and there is an open process for submissions from relevant parties. Community Representative engage in this process in the interest of their community	Call for submissions, notification in the specific area and councillors speak to community people. Door to door leaflet drop in the relevant area.
Clonmel Borough Council.	G	Plebiscite	All affected rate-payers are contacted to vote on the option they favour. In cases of estate names, all residents are invited to vote.	Call for submissions, notification in the specific area and councillors speak to community people. Door to door leaflet drop in the relevant area.

Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Clonmel Festival Committee has stakeholder reps that feed into development of Clonmel festival.	Youth festival group, sports groups, retail sector - Chambers and Traders group, musicians, artists, schools, & heritage interest groups.	Face book and twitter used. Regular meetings held. Those involved have representatives at the meetings and they influence the outcome of the festival and raise changes that are required to enable it to happen.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Residents Associations	Made up from the general public living in the estates. Tenant Liaison Officer. Councillors, Local development bodies.	Tenant Liaison Officer employed. Public meetings held. Training events for tenants held. Dealing with estate issues, identifying enhancements and developing identified capacity to facilitate improvements for the community
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Allotment Groups, Tidy towns Group and Anti-social Behaviour Forums which empower the residents to implement their plans for their estates.	Local community people are represented on these forums where government agencies work hand-in hand with the community members to overcome local issues and deliver targeted responses.	In particular residents involved in another group call 'The anti-social behaviour Forum' find being part of an overall group results in them being more anonymous when raising concerns or issues. This model of representation protects those involved to be able to speak out.

Clonmel Borough Council.	G	Housing Travellers	Consultation with the Travellers representative body Tipperary Rural Travellers, traveller families and with the community and residents .	Public meetings are held in the area proposed as the location for the traveller family, to identify and remove concerns and provide options for the communities to be proactive in finding solutions to likely issues, in advance of these issues being created.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Regeneration and/or Remedial Works -	Direct working with the community	Providing information and seeking the opinion of residents develops good relationships with the council and the community. Needs can be identified and the community can directly influence the overall final plan. Mail shots, leaflets, radio notices, community meetings, written submissions invited.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Roads Work Programme involves consultation with the retailers/chambers to ensure continuity of business.	Chambers and Association of Clonmel Traders	Direct work with the council to identify the most ideal means of proceeding with repairs that will have the least impact on the traders business.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Flood Relief Programme	Continual consultation and engagement with residents and retailers	To ensure minimal disruption and development of necessary supports during process regular meetings held with the business and community affected.

Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Delivery of the County Sustaining Retail Action Plan including consultation on Pop-up shops, street furniture, and Commercial Incentive Scheme to support needs.	Work closely with the retail sector in the town of Clonmel - this would include representatives of the chamber, traders group and tidy towns.	Regular meetings to discuss wider range of issues. Discussion papers issued to group to consider and input.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Pre budget meeting	Council members in advance of presenting budget for adoption - submission and presentation to Council by bodies such as Cuan Saor, Business Community etc.	Discussion and debate on budget figures, Submission from interested parties regarding their views on the budget.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Road Closures; Process to establish views of public regarding closures and the impact of same. Efforts to minimize these impacts are then put in place.	Public , Representative members, trade.	One-to-one meetings with the trader representatives, or community representatives.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	Transfer of land to Voluntary or Community groups by lease or simple fee for sports, social or community needs would involved	Consultation with all stakeholders including sporting bodies, agencies and communities.	Usually at the request of a community or voluntary group. There is an open process for submissions and requests and a member of staff may be allocated to work with the group to overcome any issues and move the project along.
Clonmel Borough Council.	B	The website is used for providing information on by-laws, development Plan and promotion of festivals.	Public in the town.	Town Clerk can be contacted by email or online with any concerns or views 24/7

Arts Service	B	County Arts plan -	Wide consultation throughout the county regarding new arts plan with stakeholder groups including public, Arts Groups in all county towns and others. Individuals interested in arts and culture; Youth, Elderly groups, positive mental health group, etc.	Email, mail-shots, workshops, individual meetings Arts Groups, etc. and individuals interested in arts and culture;
Arts Service	B	Connex – young people feed into development of youth festival		Meetings, focus groups, surveys.
Arts Service	B	Cultural providers group established and feed into the development of cultural activities	Youth groups in towns and villages under Foroige, Tipperary Regional Youth Services, Waterford regional youth services, Comhairle na nOg, schools and museum group.	Regular meetings.
Arts Service	B	Arts service work with Local groups in relation to implementation of arts plan	Members of service providers in the county including the Craft Granary, Tipperary Excel, the Library service, School representatives, youth groups, musicians, language organisations, elderly, rural art groups,	Public meetings. Focus Groups, attendance at weekly community network meetings, work with the schools and other public groups.
Arts Service	B	Arts officers works directly with groups such as Rural arts group to develop work	Community groups with an interest in arts. Individuals in the county with expertise in specific areas.	Links directly to villages or small towns to create a plan for the community in regard

	programme	annual plan for their community.	to arts.
Arts Service	B Arts e- bulletin used to get information out to stakeholders	Delivered to all stakeholders derived from collection of interested members of the public signing up for same.	E-bulletin sent out on a quarterly basis.
Arts Service	B Bealtaine – collaborative work done with relevant groups and older people to develop programme	Linkages to all those serving the elderly in the county including hospitals, nursing homes, Active Age Week Working Group, Alzimers groups, etc.	One-to-one meetings with the elderly representatives, or community representatives.
Arts Service	B % for art' committee	% for art committee in place which has community and arts reps making recommendations re % for art projects	Decisions made by committee regarding the selection of art projects
Cultural SPC	B Cultural SPC has community & Stakeholder reps and public representatives to feed into the output of the sector in the county.	Community Stakeholders, and Public Representatives, Members of service providers in the county including the Craft Granary, Tipperary Excel, the Library service, School representatives, youth groups, musicians, language organisations, Elderly, Rural art groups, and South Tipperary Mental Health group.	They discuss issues and feed into decision making in arts sector
Swimming Pool	B Staff work with client groups such as schools /teachers /clubs to develop annual work programmes and new offerings such	Schools/teachers /public	One to one meeting with groups and individuals give people in the community and opportunity to feed into

		as aqua aerobics, aqua gym, water polo.			development of plans and policies
Heritage	B	Heritage plan development	Public, councillors, agencies such as teagasc, Irish farmers Association, An Taisce, historical societies and the Heritage Forum (local communities with interest in all things heritage).	Public consultation/workshops/submissions re development of plan	
Heritage	B	Heritage plan implementation	Heritage Forum Group established consisting of individuals representing groups with interest in heritage.	Heritage Forum feed into and support the implementation of the Heritage Plan and support heritage officer in developing and designing projects	
Heritage	B	Bio Diversity Action Plan development and establishment	Includes members of the public, and interest organisation representative from the sector	Bio Diversity forum was established to feed into and support the development of and implementation of Biodiversity plan.	
Heritage	B	Raising Awareness Programme	People in the public arena and groups	The opportunity to feed into and influence how programmes are delivered and developed for festivals; projects; submissions; seminars; meetings; and workshops organised by heritage officer	
Heritage	B	Feedback regarding Heritage events	People in the public arena and groups	Evaluations sheets / feed back sheets	

			who attend events	used by heritage officer at all events
Heritage	B	Heritage officers networks	Heritage stakeholders: the public, members of opw, an Taisce, environmentalists, IFA, Teagasc.	Opportunities to feed into national programmes and policies through the heritage offices who often conducts consultation via networks on new programmes /policies
Heritage	B	River Suir stakeholders forum	People living near or interested in the River or fishing, boating, river bio diversity, river heritage or crafts.	River Suir stakeholders forum – network of River Suir communities and individuals with an interest in fishing, river sports, river heritage, river social economy projects.
Heritage	B	One to one meetings with stakeholders in the Heritage Area.	Individuals in the community	One to one meeting with groups and individuals give people in the community and opportunity to feed into development of plans and policies

JPC & Safety & Security group	<p>G</p> <p>JPC Forum (County and towns)</p> <p>JPC "Safety and Security Annual Action Plan"</p> <p>Safety & Security sub-committee of JPC (operational arm of JPC)</p>	Wide representation of community groups/residence groups and other interagency groups such as youth services, schools etc.	<p>Annual workshop for broader community to be involved in raising issues to be addressed by the JPC in the following years plan and reviewing progress in previous year plan with the appropriate state representatives.</p> <p>JPC forum and Safety 7 Security Sub Group have community representatives in place which contribute to the debate and agree actions</p> <p>A forum for community representatives to interact with agency representatives to draw up agreed protocol for community safety at public and annual events where there was a history of public disorder.</p>
Sports Partnership B	Wide citizenship engagement during development of Strategic Plan	Sporting organisations, youth groups, sporting facilities, public, interest groups in health.	Public meetings; focus groups; mail shots; questionnaires; stakeholder group meetings
Sports Partnership B	Sports Partnership Board has community and relevant sports stakeholders on the board feeding into decision making structures at board and sub group level	Sports persons, who have excelled are drawn from throughout the county . Sports sectors including rugby, Gaa, running and community sector. Results have shown a very inclusive programme	This partnership results in ongoing participation in decision making structures of Sports Partnership Board by the wider

			meeting identified requested needs.	
Water & Environment	G	Environment – litter management plan	All citizens - Public consultation -2 statutory consultation periods –	Notice in paper and allow time for submission Information and communications. Forum established for litter management plan consultation which involved workshops/seminars /focus groups/ emails submission
Water & Environment	G	Adoption of bye-laws	Public and interested parties depending on By-Law being adopted.	Notice in paper/libraries and on display in Council Buildings. Varied depending on by-law being adopted - e.g. control of horses by-laws – invite submission via web site.
Water & Environment	G	Part 8 of planning regulations	Public.	If proposing a development there is a public consultation period and views are invited before presentation to council for approval. Where it is a significant/controversial proposal, representative groups will be met.

Water & Environment	B	Environment and Water SPC (policy documents prepared and reviewed)	Community forum & environmental representatives on SPC including IFA, Teagasc, An Taisce.	Meetings held and issue papers and discussion documents are reviewed by the SPC before being brought to council for adoption.
Water & Environment	B	Environmental competitions and Tidy town initiatives	Tidy towns Groups ; school groups	Hosting meetings and taking recommendations and suggestions; Coordinate annual Tidy Towns workshops; participants invited to make submissions or suggestions; Regular mail shots and leaflet drops; newsletters and leaflets in public places; information sessions/workshops
Water & Environment	B	Assessment of needs re water services investment programme	Public and any relevant organisations in the county including IFA	Public consultation – draft prepared and goes out in public consultation – advertised in papers (every 3 or 4 years)
Water & Environment	B	Rural Water Schemes	Public representatives and groups scheme representatives along with farmers	Rural water committee established by council which includes public reps; groups schemes; farmers members at which members feed into decisions.
Town management	B	Chambers/Business Associations/ Traders invited to attend Town Management Team meetings to feed into the implementation and development of town plans	Chambers and Association in south Tipperary.	Attendance at council meetings. Consultative papers, one-to-one discussions.

Scheme of Community Grants-Development Levies Scheme	B	Consultation and workshops completed with relevant group in relation to priorities for scheme	Members of the public drawn from across south Tipperary, including areas such as tidy towns, youth groups, elderly and community councils.	Public consultation with groups to assist in setting the priorities for the scheme at different stages.
Planning	G	Preparation of Statutory Plans - Display Periods - South Tipperary County Development Plan Review 2015: Cashel Town Plan Review 2015; Marfield Local Area Plan 2012; Landscape Character Assessment 2013; Renewable Energy Plan 2013; Development Contribution Scheme Review ; Conservation Schemes around South Tipperary's Walled Towns etc	Public consultation on a number of planning related papers and plans. Planning SPC - Community & Voluntary Forum Reps; Business Community Rep; Green Pillar Rep; Farming Pillar rep. Key interest groups in areas of renewable energy; landscape interests; community groups involved with the Walled Towns etc.	Radio Advertisements; Local Press; Public Meetings; Information Leaflets; Online Presentations; Written invitation; E-communications – Twitter/Face book; Interagency Communications- Irish Planning Institute and public workshops.
Planning	B	Clonmel Town Car Parking Strategy	Members of the public and interested parties such as traders.	Traders intimately involved in identifying issues, priorities and suggesting solutions; Once draft drawn up, Public Display Periods; Public Meetings; Local press; Target Letters to Community Groups and traders

Planning	B	District Service Centre Enhancement Schemes (DSCES) x 14	Communities within each of the settlements of concern (community and voluntary forum used to make appropriate connections)	Workshop with community identifying initial issues/proposed projects. Once draft drawn up, Public Display Periods; Public Meetings; Local press; Target Letters to Community Groups and workshops with the community/public to explain draft. Continue working with community to implement plans.
Planning	G	Assessing Planning Applications	Individual making the application; any third party person; any third party statutory consultee (such as An Taisce)	Site Notice; Public newspaper Notice; submissions sought
Roads	B	Road Strategic Policy Committee	Community representatives on SPC, nominees from environment forum and farming pillar also on SPC	Meetings and review of relevant discussion papers.
Roads	G	Road related BYE laws	Members of the public	Adverts in local paper; submissions invited; website notices. Leaflet drops etc
Roads	G	Taking in charge	Specific housing estate residents.	Public advertisement, display and people invited to make submissions Plebisite can also be used by the estate residents requesting that the Council take it in charge

Roads	B	Road Safety strategy	Residents, youth via Comhairle Na nÓg, community groups; sporting organisations, specific estates in the community. Retail sector, business sector.	Public consultation; advertisements; workshops etc
Roads	B	Road closures	Members of the public, relevant bodies such as traders or schools.	Community are advertised in advance and can make submissions on timing and relevance of delay. Public notices and leaflet drops.
Roads	B	Strategies and plans e.g. cycling strategy	Residents, youth via Comhairle Na nÓg, community groups; sporting organisations, specific estates in the community. Retail sector, business sector. Community & Voluntary Forum. Public representatives.	Public consultation, workshops around the county, strategy put on display and members of public invited to make submissions
Roads	B	Annual Cycling Week.	Members of the public, youth groups, cycling clubs and schools.	Organise cycling day during bike week every year in consultation with the community to promote health and identify needs
Housing	B	Support to LA Residents by Tenant Liaison	90 Residents Groups in South Tipperary	Personal one-to-one; community workshops and meetings; Second Chance Programme; TLO supports the communities to develop initiatives to improve their residential area. Community Houses developed to assist in

					building community initiatives and programmes relevant to that area)
Housing	G	Traveller Accommodation Plan	Members of the Traveller community, organisation representatives of the traveller community, members of the public,	Publically advertised every 6 years to develop a consultative approach to the needs. Submissions welcomed.	
Housing	G	Assessment of Needs every 3 years.	People on waiting list, people with housing needs, people with disability and housing needs, representatives of homeless people. General public.	Advertising in media inviting existing or new people to be reviewed. Correspondence to current list for housing. Also calling for new people to make council aware of their needs to influence plan	
Housing	G	Homeless Action Plan	Voluntary Groups associated with the Homeless (St Vincent DePaul; Simon Community etc.), Community & Voluntary Forum Representatives	public consultation through seeking submissions	
Housing	B	Housing Strategic Policy Committee (Housing Needs Assessment; Traveller Accommodation Plan; Homeless Action Plan and non-statutory plans such as	Members of the committee made up from councillors, community representatives and relevant organisations such as HSE. The Community & Voluntary Forum.	Social Policy Committee are consulted on all housing policy issues to ensure the community needs are met.	

		Second Chance Programme etc		
Housing	B	Transfer of lands to community groups	Specific interest groups in the County.	Work closely and directly with community or sporting groups to assist in the transfer or lease of Council lands for social /community purpose.
Housing	B	Traveller Interagency Group	All agencies meet and consult with the Travelling community (representatives and NGOs on behalf of Travelling community) on issues of concern and seek to resolve them on an interagency basis.	Meetings every two months to discuss issues and resolve problems.
Housing	B	Elderly Accommodation Scheme	Consultation with the Elderly Fora, community representatives, Vincent DePaul, HSE.	Consultation through regular meetings to design and structure of schemes.
Housing	B	Regeneration programmes	All regeneration or remedial programmes involve strong consultation and feedback from and to the community involved	Leaflet drops, public meetings, website, workshops, one-to-one meetings with architect and project team, etc.
Library Services	B	School Programme	Teachers, School completion Programme representatives, LIT Tipperary	Direct communications with schools, advertising and media promotion.

Library Services	B	Promotion and marketing of the use of the Library Service	Members of the public, organisations working with specific groups such as elderly, youth, education programmes, etc.	Direct communications with schools, advertising and media promotion to the public.
Library Services	B	Outreach Programme	Members of the public, organisations working with specific groups such as elderly, youth, education programmes, etc. Rural community groups.	Travelling Library Services and advertising of same.
Library Services	B	Linking with other organisations to promote reading and library services	VEC, Childcare Committee, Community Development Projects, Development Company, Disability Services.	Meetings attendance; networking and participation on county structures to ensure knowledge and understanding of needs.



Fóram Pobal Chontae Mhaigh Eo Mayo County Community Forum

MAYO COMMUNITY FUTURES

Mayo Community Futures is a partnership of Community and Agencies and was established as a sub-committee by the County Community Forum in 2005 to:

- Assist communities prepare Community Action Plans
- Encourage more people to become active in their communities
- Strengthen and develop local community organisations
- Enable communities to identify and progress priority projects and actions
- Enable communities to effectively represent their interests at local, county, and national levels.

Members of the Community Futures Management committee represent; Mayo County Development Board (John Coll), Mayo County Community Forum (Brendan Sammon, Pat Conway, Francis Brennan, Liam Keaveney), Mayo LEADER (Norita Clesham SWMDC, Justin Sammon MNE), VEC (TBA) and Tochar Valley Network (Maureen Lally, Terry Gallagher). The programme is coordinated by Mary Wrafter, Support Worker, Community Forum and is supported by Colin Roxburgh, STAR who devised the Community Futures Programme in Scotland.

1 PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES

Communities are requested to apply for the programme. They undergo an interview process to determine their readiness and capacity.

- Ballycroy, Ballyhaunis, Carramore-Lacken and Islandeady successfully completed the pilot programme with Action Plans 2007 – 2010 launched in January 2007
- Balla, Carracastle/Roskey, Louisburgh/Killeen and Partry participated in phase 2 and their Action Plans 2008 – 2011 were launched in 2008
- Foxford, Killawalla, Mulranny and Turlough participated in 2009 and the plans were launched in 2010.
- Ardagh, Kilkelly, Newport and Tourmakeady completed the process in 2011
- Belcarra, Carnacon, Kiltane parish and Swinford in 2012
- Clare Island and Straide started the programme in early 2013

- A new programme is planned for 2014

2 FUNDING

Mayo Community Futures is financially supported by; Mayo County Council, Mayo Community Forum, South West Mayo Development Company, Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co and the VEC.

3 WHAT'S INVOLVED IN EACH COMMUNITY?

Communities taking part in Community Futures must set up a Community Futures Steering Group which brings together representatives from a broad selection of local clubs and organisations to help steer the planning process locally.

The Steering Groups is assigned a Community Support Volunteer who assists them carry out the community consultation that informs the plan.

Community consultation typically involves

- A household survey.
- Meetings with different individuals and sectors of the community.
- The preparation of a community profile detailing community facts and figures.
- Community futures workshops and meetings.

At the end of the consultation a Community Action Plan is written which summarises:

- The vision for the future of the community
- The community' current situation
- The main issues that need to be addressed
- The main priorities for projects and actions
- The plan is distributed to all households and to relevant public agencies.

4 HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED FOR STEERING GROUP MEMBERS?

The steering group is supported by the Community Support Volunteer who assists with gathering the information and writing it up. Typically this takes about 40 days over a six month period. However, Steering group members are expected to lead the process locally, attend regular meetings, organise the distribution & collection of survey forms, a community open day/workshop & Launch.

5 HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Typically the work takes about 6 months in each community.

6 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Most of the cost is absorbed by Mayo Community Futures. There is some cost to the community eg envelopes, refreshments for the Community Workshop Day, some matched funding for the printing and the Launch of the plan in the community.

7 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

A clear statement about our community

Community Action Plans prepared with the full involvement of the community provide a clear statement of the community's needs and aspirations. People often think they know what these are but they are rarely written down in a community owned plan that has been prepared following on from detailed community consultation.

Evidence for funding priority projects

The Plans identify the projects that the community as a whole thinks are most important for the future of their community. As such the plans help to answer the funder's most asked question – how do you know this (project or service) is important to the community?

Strengthen our ability to represent the community

Community Action Plans enable community organisations, councillors and others to represent the community at area, county or national meetings. They have a document that clearly states what the main views of the community are and they are less easily dismissed as perhaps not being fully representative or just talking about their own pet projects or coming from just one perspective.

A guide for public agencies plans and service delivery

Community Action Plans serve as a useful guide to public agencies interested in ensuring that their own plans and services are sensitive to community needs and aspirations. The Community Futures Action Plans are 'brokered' by the County Development Board and feed into strategic planning across the County.

Getting more people involved in the community

One of the aims of the Community Futures planning process is to involve more community people in thinking about and discussing the future of their community. This usually leads to more people becoming involved in taking forward the projects that are identified through this participatory process.

Strengthening community organisations

A direct result of this participation is that more people become involved in existing and new community organisations. This can help take the burden off the handful of individuals who are often at the forefront of much of the work in the community.

8 THE COMMUNITY FUTURES PROCESS

Community Futures Steering Committee

- Set up a local Community Futures Steering Committee
- Represents a broad section of clubs & organisations active in the community
- The Steering Committee drives the programme locally

Community Support Volunteer (CSV)

- Trained in the process
- Acts as a support to the Steering Committee
- Reports to the Co-ordinator
- Reimbursed for expenses
- Approx 40 days over the 6 month period
- Collates material and produces summary reports

Stakeholder Interviews

- Approx 20 interviews conducted with key people/sections of community by CSV
- Stakeholder Report

Community Views Survey

- Survey to all households
- 4 questions about community: what you like, what you do not like, what would make it better, top priorities
- Steering group organises distribution and collection
- CSV collates and produces Summary Survey Report

Community Profile

- A snapshot of the community now
- Steering group organises the collection of facts and figures
- CSV puts it together into a Community Profile

Community Day Workshop

- Everyone in community invited
- Celebration day, clubs/organisations “show their ware”
- Results of survey & stakeholder interviews displayed
- Themes and actions displayed on tables
- Public prioritises actions by voting with sticky dots
- CSV produces Workshop Report

Agency Day

- **Agency personnel invited**
- **Organised by Coordinator**
- **Communities give a presentation on the strategies and actions emerging from the process to date**
- **Aim to inform Agencies**
- **Exchange contact details & make introductions**

Final Community Action Plan

- **Draft Plan presented to Steering Group**
- **Photographs agreed & Plan approved for printing**
- **Some discussion on how to make it happen - what community structure best suited to take overview and support sub structures**
- **Plan Launched by the community**
- **Plan distributed to all households in the community**

9 CONCLUSION

Overall, the intention of the Mayo Community Futures Programme is to support stronger more proactive communities throughout Mayo to have a greater say over their future.

Within communities, the aim of the programme is to encourage the interest and participation of more people in community issues and organisations and to involve all sectors in the process of preparing community action plans

The Community Futures Programme is supported by Mayo County Development Board. It recognises the value the programme has in helping Public Agencies understand the needs and aspirations of communities and the benefits this will have in helping to shape their policies, plans and service delivery.

Appendix 7

A METHODOLOGY FOR THINKING, PLANNING AND ACTING COLLECTIVELY ON WELLBEING.

Michael Hogan

Collaborative Systems Thinking using the Interactive Management Methodology

Interactive management is a method of facilitation that helps groups to think, plan and act collectively in response to a complex situation. In a typical IM session, a group of participants who are knowledgeable about a particular situation engage in (a) developing an understanding of the situation they face, (b) establishing a collective basis for thinking about their future, and (c) producing a framework for effective action. In the process of moving through these phases, group members can develop a greater sense of teamwork and gain new communication and information-processing skills. IM is not difficult to learn and implement, and has been applied successfully in a broad variety of situations.

IM utilizes a carefully selected set of methodologies, matched to the phase of group interaction and the requirements of the situation. The most common methodologies are the nominal group technique, ideawriting, interpretive structural modeling, and field and profile representations. The first two methodologies are primarily employed for the purpose of generating ideas that are then structured using one or more of the latter three methodologies.

The *nominal group technique* (NGT; Delbeq, Van De Ven, & Gustafson, 1975) is a method that allows individual ideas to be pooled, and is best used in situations in which uncertainty and disagreements exist about the nature of possible ideas. NGT involves five steps: (a) presentation of a stimulus question to participants; (b) silent generation of ideas in writing by each participant working alone; (c) "round-robin" presentation of ideas by participants, with recording on flipchart by the facilitator of these ideas and posting of the flipchart paper on walls surrounding the group; (d) serial discussion of the listed ideas by participants for sole purpose of clarifying their meaning (i.e., no evaluation of ideas is allowed at this point); and (e) implementation of a closed voting process in which each participant is asked to select and rank five ideas from the list, with the results compiled and displayed for review by the group.

Ideawriting (Warfield, 1994) is a method that utilizes relatively small groups of 4-6 persons each, formed by dividing a larger group into several working teams, for the purpose of developing ideas and exploring the meaning of those ideas through open discussion. Ideawriting involves five steps: (a) presentation of a stimulus question to participants; (b) silent generation of ideas in writing by each participant working alone; (c) exchange of written sheets of ideas among all group members, with opportunity for individuals to add ideas as they read others' papers; (e) discussion and clarification of unique ideas; and (f) an oral report of the ideas generated by each working group in a plenary session. In this plenary session, duplicate ideas across the working groups are eliminated from the set and new ideas (if any) are added; the resulting set of ideas is then ready for use in the next stage of the group's work, which might involve one or more of the following methodologies.

Interpretive structural modeling (ISM; Warfield, 1994) is a computer-assisted methodology that helps a group to identify relationships among ideas and to impose structure on those ideas to help manage the complexity of the issue. Specifically, the ISM software utilizes mathematical algorithms that minimize the number of queries necessary for exploring relationships among a set of ideas (see Warfield, 1976). ISM can be used to develop several types of structures depicting the relationships among a set of ideas, including influence structures (e.g., “supports” or “aggravates”), priority structures (e.g., “is more important than” or “should be learned before”) and categorizations of ideas (e.g., “belongs in the same category with”). The five steps of ISM are: (a) identification and clarification of a list of ideas (using a method such as NGT or ideawriting); (b) identification and clarification of a “relational question” for exploring relationships among ideas (e.g., “Does idea A support idea B?,” “Is idea A of higher priority than B?,” or “Does idea A belong in the same category with idea B?”); (c) development of a structural map by using the relational question to explore connections between pairs of ideas (see below); (d) display and discussion of the map by the group; and (e) amendment to the map by the group, if needed.

In the third step of developing a structural map, questions are generated by the ISM software and are projected onto a screen located in front of the group. The questions take the following form:

“Does idea A relate in X manner to idea B?”

“A” and “B” are pairs of ideas from the list developed by participants in the first step of ISM and the question of whether they “relate in X manner” is the statement identified in the second step.

For example, if a group is developing an influence structure with problem statements, the question might read:

“Does problem A significantly aggravate problem B?”

Using the ISM methodology, the group engages in discussion about this relational question and a vote is taken to determine the group’s judgment about the relationship. A “yes” vote is entered in the ISM software by the computer operator if a majority of the participants see a significant relationship between the pair of ideas; otherwise, a “no” vote is entered. Another pair of ideas is then projected on the screen in front of participants, another discussion is held, and a vote is taken. This process is continued until the relationships between all necessary pairs of ideas have been explored. The ISM software then provides to the facilitator the information from which a structural map can be constructed, showing the result of the group’s series of judgments about pairs of ideas. The length of time required to complete discussion of all necessary pairs of ideas depends on the total number of ideas in the set, but, generally, the process requires between 3-5 hours of group deliberation. The number of necessary queries also depends on the total number of ideas in the set, but the ISM software is able to infer during the structuring process an average of approximately 70-80% of the judgments involved in relating the complete set of ideas.

The influence structuring work conducted with ISM can be considered an activity in “mapping perceptions” of the group members. Participants are given the opportunity to explore connections and links between ideas in ways that probably would have gone undetected without such structuring work. ISM can, thus, provide participants with useful insights into the relationships between ideas and it generates a product, a structural map of those relationships, which can guide their thinking as they design potential solutions.

Field representation (Warfield & Cardenas, 1995) organizes ideas in a way that allows a large amount of information to be worked with effectively. There are different types of field representations that are useful for different types of applications, but, typically, a field representation portrays a significant amount of information organized in a form that (a) is appropriate for use in making decisions and (b) maintains an ongoing, visible record of intermediate decision making en route to a final portrayal of the total set of choices that has been made. A field representation shows a set of categories and the members of each of those categories. When appropriate, the group might engage in a structuring process (using ISM) to sequence the categories according to agreed-on criteria.

The portrayal of choices in the field representation technique constitutes a *profile representation*. In constructing a profile, a group examines the first category of the field and chooses elements from that category. Each choice is represented graphically by drawing a line from the bullet in front of a selected element down to a “tie line,” a continuous line drawn at the base of the graphic, beneath the full category set. After all choices are made, the selected elements are connected to the tie line; all elements that have not been selected remain unconnected. In this way, the viewer is presented with a graphical portrayal of both selected items and the full set of items considered for inclusion in the final product.

Consulting with Irish Citizens and Wellbeing Experts using Interactive Management

To provide an example of an ongoing project, Figure 1 illustrates a problematique generated by participants at the Wellbeing in Ireland Conference (NUI, Galway, 2012) in response to the trigger question, *What are Barriers to Wellbeing in Ireland?* The problematique is to be read from left to right, with paths in the model interpreted as ‘significantly aggravates’. Boxes with two or more elements together indicate reciprocally interrelated elements. Tracing one path of negative influence through the model, conference participants identified the absence of holistic approaches to healthcare, lack of a space for dialogue on holistic views of wellbeing, lack of understanding as regards the nature of wellbeing and how to measure it, and no national measurement of wellbeing as critical barriers to wellbeing in Ireland (Hogan & Broome, 2012).

Figure 1: Influence Structure of Barriers to Well-Being in Ireland.

The second Wellbeing in Ireland conference focused on wellbeing measurement and the design of a national wellbeing index for Ireland (Hogan and Broome, 2013). In advance of the conference, participants were asked to reflect on the broad issue of wellbeing in Ireland and generate a list of strategic objectives in response to the following question: *In the context of developing a new national wellbeing index for Ireland, what are the strategic objectives that should guide our efforts to enhance the wellbeing of the people of Ireland over the coming decade?* Survey responses were analysed and ten domains of strategic objectives emerged. Conference participants then engaged in discussion to further develop strategic objectives within each domain. Strategic objectives were posted on display walls and participants were given time to clarify objectives. Participants were given time to study all objectives before voting to select their top objectives from the full list. Selected objectives across 10 wellbeing domains are listed below.

Table 1. Top Ranked Strategic Objectives across Ten Wellbeing domains

Education
To facilitate personal development and the development of critical life skills in Irish youth
To educate people about the dimensions of wellbeing
Business and Employment
To provide employees in Ireland with rewarding and fulfilling employment opportunities and conditions
To develop ethical frameworks in business to promote wellbeing
Community
To ensure that all citizens have the freedom and agency to bring about positive change in their communities
To promote the stimulation of peoples' intrinsic values (i.e. autonomy, competence, relatedness)
Health
To make healthy choice the easy choice
To promote access to healthcare for all citizens in Ireland
Democracy
To educate people about the need for and importance of democracy
To ensure the voice of vulnerable groups is heard
Environment
To recognise and respect the multi-dimensional aspects of the environment and how vital they are
To create beautiful and enjoyable environments for people to live, work and spend time in
Sustainability
To ensure future planning and development is sustainable
To enhance appreciation of Ireland's uniqueness in terms of its rich linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage
Governance
To ensure that research is promptly fed back at a government level so that policy change can occur
To promote leadership and governance with an emphasis on community participation
Lifestyle
To enhance quality of life-work balance
To improve childcare and maternity/paternity leave to enhance early family experience
Equality
To ensure policy goals toward equal opportunities acknowledge unequal starting points
To reduce socio-economic inequalities

Conference participants next used the IM software to structure interdependencies among the highest ranked objectives (see Figure 2). The figure is to be read from left to right and arrows indicate 'significantly enhances'. As can be seen from Figure 2, participants argued that promoting leadership and governance with an emphasis on community participation is a fundamental driver in the system and promoting this objective is thus likely to increase our chances of achieving all other objectives in the system of interdependent objectives.

Figure 2

Well-Being in Ireland Conference Strategic Objectives Structure



Interactive Management is a methodology that is firmly rooted in systems science and the learning sciences. Established as a formal system of facilitation in 1980 after a developmental phase that started in 1974, IM was designed to assist groups in dealing with complex issues (see Warfield, 2006). The theoretical constructs that inform IM draw from both behavioral and cognitive sciences, with a strong basis in general systems thinking. Emphasis is given to balancing behavioral and technical demands of group work (Broome & Chen, 1992) while honoring design laws concerning variety, parsimony, and saliency (Ashby, 1958; Boulding, 1966; Miller, 1956). IM has been applied in a variety of situations to accomplish many different goals, including assisting city councils in making budget cuts (Coke & Moore, 1981), designing a national agenda for pediatric nursing (Feeg, 1988), creating computer-based information systems for organizations (Keever, 1989), improving the U.S. Department of Defense's acquisition process (Alberts, 1992), promoting world peace (Christakis, 1987), improving Tribal governance process in Native American communities (Broome, 1995), and training facilitators (Broome & Fulbright, 1995). The IM approach carefully delineates content and process roles, assigning to participants responsibility for contributing ideas and to the facilitator responsibility for choosing and implementing selected methodologies for generating, clarifying, structuring, interpreting, and amending ideas. Emphasis is given to balancing behavioral and technical demands of group work (Broome & Chen, 1992) while honoring design laws concerning variety, parsimony, and saliency (Ashby, 1958; Boulding, 1966; Miller, 1956).

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Appendix 8 – Volunteering

Volunteer Ireland and the Network of Volunteer Centres

This document provides an outline of the work of Volunteer Ireland and local Volunteer Centres. The importance of volunteering (formal and informal) in creating a more engaged citizenship and the associated importance of supporting volunteering cannot be overstated. The volunteering infrastructure supports any and all non-profit organisation in Ireland. Although the C&V sector is significant as the ‘place’ where much volunteering is undertaken, the two are not synonymous. The work of the volunteering infrastructure across all sectors illustrates this reality. It is with respect to volunteers themselves however, that the volunteering infrastructure can bring a unique perspective, informed as it is by volunteers from all walks of life. This is not to suggest the volunteering infrastructure currently ‘represents’ volunteers in a formal capacity, though it is a voice of volunteers. Further, the volunteering infrastructure could potentially assist local government (and/or local and community development committees), whether that relates to gathering the views and voices of volunteers, as a conduit to volunteers, developing active participation in local authority-related functions or initiatives and/or with respect to co-production of public services.

Volunteer Ireland is the national development agency and support body for all local Volunteer Centres in Ireland. There are currently 22 Volunteer Centres (VCs), operating across 17.5 counties (most are county-wide entities, with the exception of South Tipperary Volunteer Centres, and those operating in Dublin, which operate per local authority area).

Volunteer Ireland has three strategic aims: to increase access *to*; awareness *of*; and quality *in* volunteering. Services and programmes include the following:

- Administering I-VOL, the national database of volunteering opportunities, and www.volunteer.ie as a depository of information, research and step-by-step guides for volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and anyone interested in knowing more about volunteering.
- Providing training and consultancy on all aspects of volunteering and volunteer management, including programme evaluation and quality/awards programme.
- Country representative for Volunteer Impact, cloud-based volunteer management solution.
- Garda Vetting for organisations that send volunteers overseas.
- Undertaking research on volunteering (most recently, on older people and volunteering).
- National, annual awareness campaigns including National Volunteering Week and the Volunteer Ireland Volunteer Awards.
- Matching service for Employer Supported Volunteering programmes within for-profit organisations.
- Providing volunteer management services for events and short-term programmes.
- Co-ordinating a national volunteer management conference annually.
- Strategic partnerships to advance mutual aims (e.g. the Wheel, USI, INOU etc)

- Supporting Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services, and lead the evaluation of Volunteer Centres according to a quality standard framework designed for the purpose.

Volunteer Centres are local volunteer development agencies that work on-the-ground delivering services according to the following four core principles: services to volunteers; services to volunteer-involving organisations; promotion of volunteering; and best practice in service delivery. Services VCs offer include the following:

- Local administration of I-VOL and one-to-one support for volunteers requiring additional support.
- Brokerage/matching service between volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.
- Outreaches directed at volunteers, including volunteer fairs and training to for individuals thinking about volunteering (300 individuals received training in 2012).
- Providing Volunteer Ireland's Volunteer Management Training programme (300 organisations trained in 2012).
- Garda Vetting for organisations without an authorised signatory (6,500 applications processed in 2012).
- Delivering and/or participating in national VI campaigns at local level.
- Initiating individual campaigns and programmes, for example:
 - Event volunteer / volunteer corp;
 - Student volunteering programmes at first, second and third level;
 - Volunteer discount scheme.

As Volunteer Ireland is at national level, local volunteer centres are a key element of the local community and development and civil society landscape. VCs have mutually beneficial relationships with local development companies, city and town councils, local authorities, city/county development boards, chambers of commerce, community and voluntary fora, citizens information, community resource centres, family resource centres, the health service executive, sports partnerships, libraries, first, second and third level educational establishments (including education and training boards), community service and an Garda Síochána.

In 2012:

- 15,500 individuals registered to volunteer on I-VOL and/or via a local VC;
- 66% of these were female, 34% male.
- 58% had never volunteered before.
- 64% were aged 35 or under, with 54% of those aged under 35 in the 16-25 year age group.
- 15% were not sure what cause or activity they wanted to volunteer for, only that they wanted to do something.
- 32% were non-Irish nationals.
- Estimated combined contribution: 466,000 hours and €10.2m.

It is difficult to contextualise these figures with respect to volunteering in Ireland more generally as official statistics on volunteering are not collected. The closest we have come is the 2006 census in which a question on volunteering was included. According to the 2006 census, 16.4% of the population aged 16+ were involved in a volunteering activity in the month previous to census night (i.e. over 563,500 persons) and people aged 20-24 were least likely to volunteer. In the context of well being, a number of questions relating to

volunteering appeared in the third Quarterly National Household Survey this year, the results of which will be released in November.

As can be seen from the above outline of activities of Volunteer Ireland and local Volunteer Centre, the reach and impact of the combined national/local volunteering infrastructure is significant. There are currently more than 8,000 organisations and over 67,500 individuals registered on I-VOL. Organisations range from the very smallest to the very largest, with individual volunteers drawn from across the spectrum of society.

Appendix 9 – Resources Checklist for the PPN

- a) The Network registration form, which should be completed annually by organisations
- b) A 'Representatives Charter' which outlines the requirement of the Network representative
- c) The necessary skills/experience required for the resource worker and how they can be managed
- d) Feedback forms for representatives to feed back about a particular meeting / board/committee that they are representing the PPN on. [there is an example of this in the CV Pillar document that Deirdre sent around]
- e) A protocol for Local Authorities to agree and adopt for all committees/decision making committees with PPN representatives
- f) Suggested Agenda for PPN Plenary and Municipal District meetings
The agenda for Network meetings could include:-
 - Minutes
 - Matters Arising
 - Matters for Decision
 - County PPN Updates
 - Local PPN Updates
 - Updates from members represented on decision making groups
 - A.O.B. (decided at a local level)

