



Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Public Participation Network Representatives Charter (Draft) - October 2019

Introduction

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Public Participation Network (DLR PPN) is an independent umbrella network of community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups active within the county. Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were established by the Irish government under the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014 to support and facilitate the participation of these groups in Local Authority policy and decision-making.

DLR PPN members elect representatives to a variety of policy and decision making structures in the county, including Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Local Community Development Committee, Joint Policing Committee and Strategic Policy Committees.

This charter provides you, as a DLR PPN representative, with guidance on your role, what support you can expect and what is expected of you.

Criteria for being a DLR PPN representative

Representing the views of DLR PPN members on policy and decision making structures is an important task. In order to ensure that representation is informed and based on knowledge of the policy area and on commitment to the values of the PPN, DLR PPN representatives should have the following:

- An awareness of general policy in the area you are seeking to represent on;
- An understanding of the principles and values of Public Participation Networks and a commitment to promoting these principles and values through your role as a DLR PPN representative.
- A desire to influence policy for the benefit of all communities in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and for the wellbeing of future generations living in our county.

Linkage Groups

The 2019 Local Elections marked the beginning of a new Council term and the establishment of the new Strategic Policy Committee Scheme in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. Accordingly, reps will need to be appointed to each Strategic Policy Committee [SPC]. The election of reps to the Joint Policing Committee has already taken place.

DLR PPN will be developing linkage groups of PPN representatives on the local authority's policy-making committees together with PPN members who share an interest in a particular policy area or theme. Representatives and linkage groups work together in order to feed into and shape local authority policy and decision making.

- Linkage groups advise PPN representatives on issues to enable the linkage group's views be represented on the local authority's decision-making committees.
- Each linkage group receives feedback on issues pertinent to that linkage group.
- Linkage groups act as a reference point for DLR PPN representatives and give DLR PPN representatives a mandate. DLR PPN representatives are required to be members of and attend Linkage Group meetings and to co-operate with DLR PPN staff to organise Linkage group meetings.
- Linkage groups can directly relate to a policy area of one of the local authority's committees, for example Social Housing, or have a cross-cutting theme that covers different policy areas, such as Disability.
- Linkage Groups are open to all members of DLR PPN.

Your role as a DLR PPN Representative

Your role as a DLR PPN representative is to:

- Actively participate in the committee to which you are elected and in the relevant DLR PPN Linkage Groups.
- Work collaboratively with members of the Linkage Group to identify issues, questions and policy proposals for the work of the Board or Committee to which you have been elected.
- Bring forward the issues of the Linkage Group to the Board or Committee for their consideration, including putting items on the agenda. DLR PPN representatives cannot only represent their own group or agenda.
- Communicate regularly (at least as frequently as meetings are held) with the Linkage Group, the PPN Manager and PPN Secretariat on matters such as:
 - Dates of Board or Committee meetings
 - Agendas for Board or Committee meetings
 - Reports and Feedback from Board or Committee meetings
 - Items which require the input of, or are of interest to the Linkage Group
- Attend and participate fully in meetings of the Board or Committee to which you have been elected, including any subgroups to which you are appointed.
- Bring any issues, questions and proposals identified by the Linkage Group to the Board or Committee for their consideration.
- Seek the inclusion of items on the agenda, ask questions and make proposals as instructed by the Linkage Group.
- Network and work strategically with other Board or Committee members for the benefit of the Linkage Group and of the PPN, including being able to compromise while retaining the core objective.

- The role of a PPN representative is to represent the views of PPN members and not just the views of your own organisation. Therefore PPN representatives have a responsibility to seek the views of members and feedback information from your committee to PPN members.

Responsibilities of a DLR PPN Representative

- Before meetings of the committee or board you are a member of provide the DLR PPN manager with the following information for circulation to the Linkage Groups: Meeting date; Meeting agenda and relevant documents; Highlight any items of interest which require DLR PPN action in advance of the meetings.
- Attend the Linkage Group meeting in advance of the committee or board meeting and work collaboratively with DLR PPN members to identify issues, research and develop policy proposals and positions and identify key questions and comments on agenda items.
- Prepare thoroughly for the committee or board meeting including by reading all relevant documentation and meeting in advance with other DLR PPN reps on the committee if possible.
- Support each other as representatives in meetings of the board or committee.
- Work strategically with the other DLR PPN representatives and other members of the committee to bring forward the issues raised by the Linkage Group and to advance the policies and positions, vision and values of DLR PPN;
- Agree the role of note taker with fellow representatives and ensure that person drafts a report of the meeting.
- After meetings submit a meeting report using the DLR PPN reporting template to the manager for circulation to the Linkage Group and on the website.
- Attend the twice-yearly meetings of the DLR PPN Plenary to answer any questions or queries from the membership and give a summary report if required.
- Bring to the attention of the committee chairperson any conflicts of interest or loyalties that arise and may impact on your role as a representative.
- Attend the committee meetings regularly and punctually; give apologies in advance to the committee or board if you cannot make the meeting and notify the DLR PPN manager.
- If you are no longer able to regularly attend committee meetings you must step down as a DLR PPN representative by notifying the DLR PPN manager.

DLR PPN's Commitment to Representatives

DLR PPN will support its representatives to perform their role by:

- Providing relevant training and induction for the representative role.
- Working with representatives to organise regular Linkage Group meetings.
- Proactively addressing any barriers to participation experienced by DLR PPN representatives.
- Supporting representatives' attendance at DLR PPN events where appropriate.

- Providing organisational and admin support to representatives as needed.
- Responding in a respectful, supportive and timely manner to any concerns or issues regarding their work as a representative.

DLR PPN's Expectations of Committees/Boards with DLR PPN Representation

DLR PPN expects structures to which DLR PPN representatives are elected to undertake the following:

- Provide timely induction supports from the committee or board, including terms of reference, standing orders, meeting schedules, technical support and contact details for committee or board members.
- Ensure timely access to the relevant meeting documentation for a committee or board, timely meaning in enough time to hold a linkage group meeting.
- Ensure meeting documentation is in an accessible format.
- Provide outcome reports soon after the committee or board meeting, if this has been agreed by the committee or board.
- Respect DLR PPN representatives as equal partners with due regard to their dignity, experience and due respect for their voluntary role.
- Provide expenses for attending meetings, including subgroup and associated meetings, where appropriate and in line with the policy of the committee or board.

Conflict Resolution

In the event of any dispute, conflict or grievance arising between DLR PPN representatives, or between DLR PPN representatives and DLR PPN members, or between DLR PPN representatives and DLR PPN that impacts on DLR PPN's work:

- a) In the first case DLR PPN will seek to resolve it informally through dialogue between those involved.
- b) If this is not successful the complainant(s) will be asked to detail their concerns in writing to the Secretariat. The Secretariat will appoint at least two members, one of whom will be from the same pillar group as the complainant, to meet with the complainant(s) and address their concerns in a respectful, supportive and timely manner.
- c) This sub-group will report back to the full Secretariat on how the conflict can be resolved and action will be taken accordingly.
- d) If DLR PPN representatives are deemed by the Secretariat to not be adequately meeting the responsibilities of their role as outlined above, in the first instance an informal warning will be issued to the representative. If the problem continues a formal written warning will be issued to the representative. If the situation does not improve after the formal written warning has been received the representative will be asked to step down.