

Kilkenny Public Participation Network Constitution



Adopted by vote of a County Plenary on the 7th day of June 2016

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Objectives.....	3
1.2	Introduction	3
1.3	Values and Principles	4
1.4	Structure of the PPN	4
2	Plenary	6
2.1	Role	6
2.2	Meetings	6
2.3	Elections	7
2.4	Membership entitlements	8
2.5	Membership Criteria	9
3	Pillars	11
3.1	Role	11
3.2	Meetings	11
3.3	Membership Criteria	12
4	Municipal Districts	12
4.1	Role	12
4.2	Meetings	13
4.3	Membership Criteria	13
5	Secretariat	13
5.1	Role	13
5.2	Meetings	15
5.3	Membership Criteria	15
6	Linkage Groups.....	16
6.1	Purpose and establishment	16
6.2	Role	16
6.3	Meetings	16
6.4	Membership Criteria	16
7	Amendments to the Constitution	17

1 Introduction

The Kilkenny Public Participation Network is a countywide network that facilitates people from the community, social inclusion and environmental sectors to participate in local decision making structures. It is part of the framework for public participation in local government and it has a statutory basis in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46).

1.1 Objectives

The PPN will work with the community, social inclusion and environmental sectors to:

1.2 Introduction

- 1.2.1 Facilitate and contribute to opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information.
- 1.2.2 To develop the Kilkenny PPN as a resource for the community, social inclusion and environmental sectors and communities in Kilkenny City.
- 1.2.3 Strengthen their (1.2.2) capacity to contribute positively to the community.
- 1.2.4 Identify issues of collective concern and ensure the sectors have a strong collective voice.
- 1.2.5 Acknowledge and promote the contribution they make to society.
- 1.2.6 To develop policy and positions on issues of common concern to the sectors and to communities and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented.
- 1.2.7 Actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty and communities experiencing discrimination.
- 1.2.8 Encourage and enable participation in local decision making and planning of services.
- 1.2.9 Take an active formal role in policy making and oversight committees of the Kilkenny Local authority.
- 1.2.10 Ensure clear and transparent mechanisms for the selection of members of the local community to participate in policy making fora and facilitate elections onto decision making bodies.
- 1.2.11 Facilitate a high level of accountability and feedback mechanisms to PPN members.

- 1.2.12 Engage members in processes that will feed into policies and plans and provide a strong voice of community, voluntary and environmental sectors on local decision-making structures.
- 1.2.13 Support individual members of the PPN to develop their capacity to do their own work effectively and also participate effectively in the activities of the PPN.
- 1.2.14 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.
- 1.2.15 Work to affect national and regional policies in collaboration with other PPNs.
- 1.2.16 To develop the Kilkenny PPN as a resource for the community, voluntary and environmental sectors and communities in the County.

1.3 Values and Principles

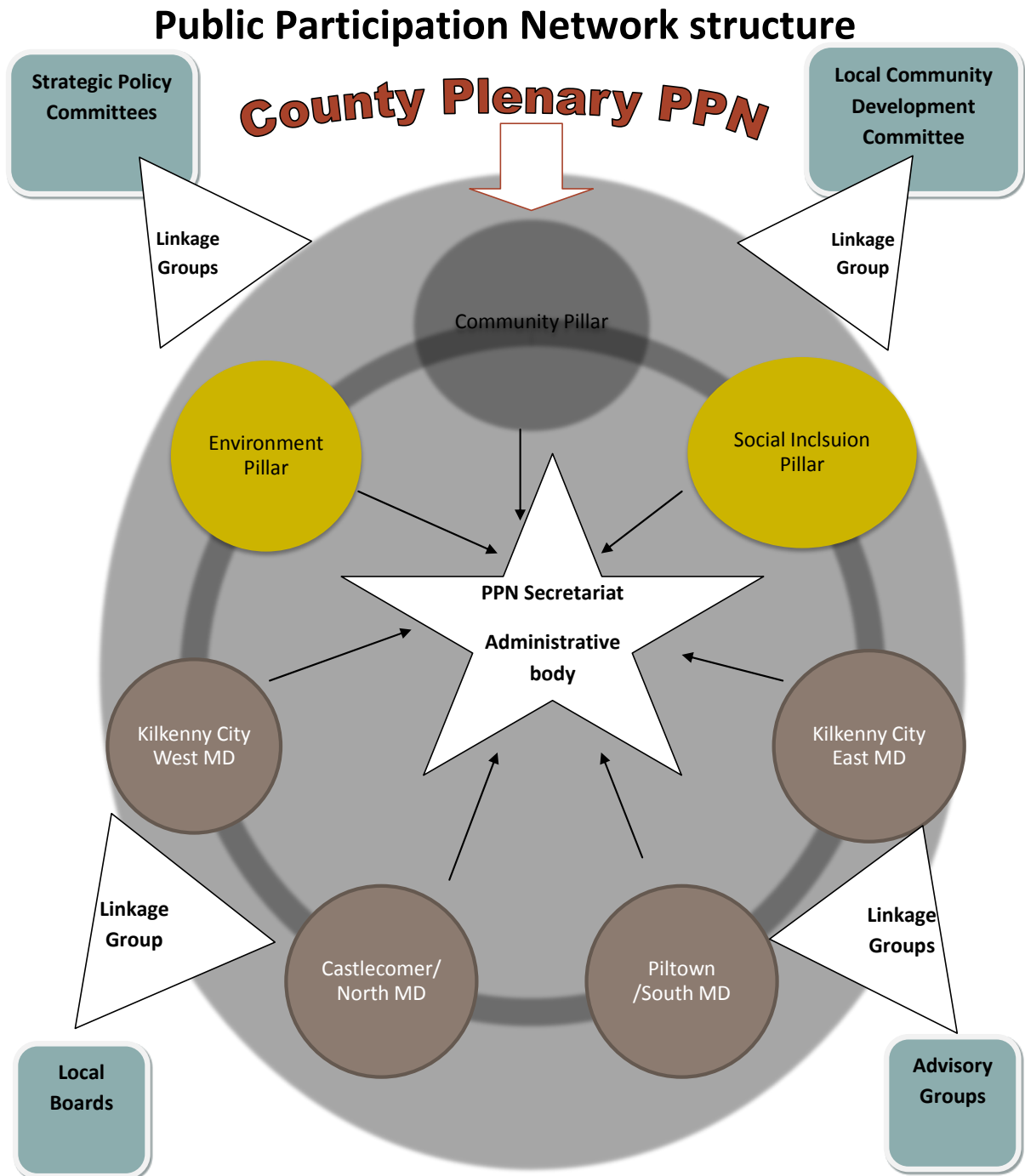
Kilkenny PPN will adhere to the following values and principles.

- 1.3.1 Promote diversity, equality, social justice and fairness.
- 1.3.2 Adhere to the principles of good governance.
- 1.3.3 Be inclusive of all groups and value diversity.
- 1.3.4 Work in a collaborative, transparent and fair way.
- 1.3.5 Be accountable to its membership.
- 1.3.6 Be participatory in its approach.
- 1.3.7 Act as an independent body.

1.4 Structure of the PPN

The Kilkenny PPN shall be composed of its registered member groups in the county.

The PPN is made up of a number of interconnected structures, these are: the County Plenary, Pillars, Municipal Districts, Secretariat, and Linkage Groups.



2 Plenary

2.1 Role

- 2.1.1 The County Plenary is the sole ruling and decision making body of the PPN.
- 2.1.2 The County Plenary will adhere to the objectives set out in section 1.1.
- 2.1.3 The County Plenary hosts elections to the Secretariat every 3 years,.
- 2.1.4 The County Plenary endorses any strategies and reviews undertaken on the work of the PPN.
- 2.1.5 The County Plenary delegates the day-to-day running of the PPN to the Secretariat which is administered through the Resource Worker, and their office, together with ancillary staff.

2.2 Meetings

- 2.2.1 The County Plenary will meet a minimum of 2 times per year.
- 2.2.2 A maximum of 3 representatives of a member organization can attend a County Plenary.
- 2.2.3 A special meeting of the County Plenary can be called if requested by two thirds of membership groups by petition of members.
- 2.2.4 All PPN members are entitled to 21 days notice by post or electronic means of a County Plenary meeting.
- 2.2.5 A County Plenary meeting shall be deemed valid if at least 10% of the Member Organisations are represented, and a minimum of 3 of Secretariat members are present.
- 2.2.6 A record of attendance and minutes will be kept for all meetings.
- 2.2.7 Minutes of County Plenary meetings will be published on the PPN website, following approval by the County Plenary at their next meeting.
- 2.2.8 County Plenary meetings will be facilitated/chaired by a person nominated by the Secretariat.
- 2.2.9 If considered appropriate by the Secretariat, a non-member may be invited to attend a meeting and speak on a specific agenda item.
- 2.2.10 Motions for discussion should be submitted to the Secretariat 7 days after notification of the County Plenary.

- 2.2.11 A motion can be submitted by the governing body of a registered member of the PPN, a Linkage Group, Municipal Plenary or Pillar.
- 2.2.12 Decisions of the County Plenary will be made by taking a vote. Decisions will be carried by a simple majority of all members present, except for the expulsion of a member as outlined in section 2.5.21.
- 2.2.13 In the event that there is a tie in a vote, the chairperson will have the casting vote. The chairperson of the meeting (see 2.2.8) will act in accordance with the agreed view of the wider Secretariat.

2.3 Elections

- 2.3.1 Pillars will nominate and vote on representatives to sit on SPCs, LCDC, Joint Policing Committee, and all other committees on which the Kilkenny PPN will be entitled to be represented.
- 2.3.2 PPN membership groups shall be given not less than 21 days notice of a nomination and election process.
- 2.3.3 For the purposes of the election to the Secretariat, each PPN membership group is entitled to nominate one person for their Municipal District and 1 person for their Pillar.
- 2.3.4 Nomination papers will be sent to each membership group, to the email or address indicated on the PPN registration form.
- 2.3.5 Nomination forms must be fully completed, by an officer of the nominating group, to be eligible for inclusion in the election.
- 2.3.6 A returning officer, selected by Kilkenny PPN Secretariat will decide on the validity of the nomination forms and their decision is final.
- 2.3.7 Nomination forms must be submitted online, via post or electronic means, or by another method as decided by the PPN Secretariat.
- 2.3.8 Members are to be nominated to the LCDC from the PPN (two from the Community Pillar, two from the Social Inclusion Pillar and one from the Environment Pillar).
- 2.3.9 All fully completed nominations received by the closing date, which are deemed eligible, will be put forward for the election.
- 2.3.10 A set of voting papers will be issued to the person nominated to represent the group at the meeting– as indicated on the PPN registration form.

- 2.3.11 Ballot papers will only be issued to representatives who have been named in advance of the meeting.
- 2.3.12 Officers will be appointed by Kilkenny PPN Secretariat to oversee the election and count the ballot papers.
- 2.3.13 In the event that a clear preference is not indicated on a ballot sheet, it will be deemed a spoiled vote and will not be counted.
- 2.3.14 In the event of a tie, the successful candidate will be determined by lot. The names of tied candidates will put in a hat. The first name drawn out will be deemed to be elected. If there are two seats the first two names drawn out will be deemed elected.
- 2.3.15 Voting will take place in accordance with the 'first past the post' system.
- 2.3.16 Where the number of candidates exceeds the number of seats, the person(s) who receives the highest number of votes will be deemed elected, taking into consideration measures to ensure gender balance and a geographic spread of candidates, as appropriate.
- 2.3.17 Appeals on the nomination and or election process should be made in writing to the PPN Secretariat with 7 working days of the announcement of either nominees, or election results.
- 2.3.18 A representative of a PPN member organisation who intends to run for public office must declare their interest in so doing, and on formal nomination for public office must step down from the PPN representative position for the period of the elections, but can return if not elected.
- 2.3.19 No representative of a PPN member organization can contest more than one PPN seats on a Council or other committee.

2.4 Membership entitlements

- 2.4.1 Each PPN member organisation will have one vote at the County Plenary.
- 2.4.2 PPN member organisations will be entitled to nominate representatives to elected council and other appropriate committee positions.
- 2.4.3 Nominations for vacant positions on structures on which Kilkenny PPN is represented will be sought from its membership.
- 2.4.4 In the event that the vacancy is streamed according to Pillar, nominations will be restricted to the member organisations of that Pillar.

- 2.4.5 Elections to the Local Community Development Committee will be streamed according to Pillar.
- 2.4.6 Where the number of nominees equals the number of available places then the nominees in question will be deemed automatically elected, without the need for a vote.
- 2.4.7 Where the number of nominees exceeds the number of available places then an election will follow.
- 2.4.8 Where there are insufficient numbers of nominees for the number of places available then nominations can be made when dealing with the agenda item.

2.5 Membership Criteria

To qualify for membership, groups must fulfill the following criteria:

- 2.5.1 Groups are not-for-profit and operate within the community, voluntary and environmental sectors.
- 2.5.2 Have more than five (5) members.
- 2.5.3 Have a written constitution, operating rules & procedures and/or memorandum & articles of association.
- 2.5.4 Be a minimum of six months in existence at application.
- 2.5.5 Be open to new members.
- 2.5.6 Have a formal structure e.g. Chairperson, Secretary or Equivalent.
- 2.5.7 Be active in County Kilkenny.
- 2.5.8 Be broadly representative of and accountable to its membership base within County Kilkenny.
- 2.5.9 Hold an AGM and have regular meetings.
- 2.5.10 Be non-party political, non-sectarian and non discriminatory.
- 2.5.11 Groups must be able to establish their bona fides and provide documentation if requested to do so.
- 2.5.12 Political parties will not be able to affiliate.
- 2.5.13 Public representatives (Councillors, TDs, Senators, MEPS etc), or those who have held such office within the past 12 months may not participate in the PPN.

2.5.14 Organisations can only be registered within only one Pillar. The Pillar is chosen by the applicant.

2.5.15 All PPN members will opt to be a member of one of the three Pillars ; Community, Social Inclusion or Environmental , and one of the four Municipal Districts ; East, West, South or North.

2.5.16 Registration can be carried out at any time.

2.5.17 There will be an annual call for registration of new members and renewal of existing members.

2.5.18 In the event of a dispute regarding eligibility, the Secretariat will determine eligibility for registration.

2.5.19 Groups can resign at any time by notification from their governing body to the Secretariat in writing.

2.5.20 Where the same person is nominated for a Pillar and a Municipal District, they will be asked to identify which position they prefer. No candidate can contest two seats.

2.5.21 Expulsion of Member Organisation.

A proposal to expel a PPN member organisation may be made in the event of an organization :

(a) Acting in a manner contrary to the values, aims or objectives of the Kilkenny City Community Network as outlined in Part 1.2 of the Constitution;

(b) Failing to comply with the criteria for membership as outlined in Part 2.3 of the Constitution.

In the event of it being necessary to expel an organisation from membership of the Kilkenny PPN, the PPN will act in accordance with the following procedure:

- (i) A proposal to expel an organisation may be made by the Secretariat, or by a simple majority of delegates present at a County Plenary meeting.
- (ii) The proposal to expel will be placed on the agenda for the next County Plenary meeting, and the organisation concerned will be notified of the intention to raise the matter at least one month before the meeting at which the expulsion is to be considered. The organisation will be given an opportunity to address the issue at the County Plenary meeting.
- (iii) The expulsion will be effective if passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present at the County Plenary meeting.

2.5.22 While the expulsion process is being pursued, voting rights for the organisation will be suspended until the issue has been resolved. In line with due process and the disciplinary procedures document, a membership group may be exonerated or removed from the PPN. An expulsion of a PPN member organization may be appealed to the Department of the Environment.

2.5.23 Any PPN seats on Council or other committees, occupied by an expelled PPN member organisation, shall be forfeited by that organisation immediately upon expulsion from the PPN.

3 Pillars

3.1 Role

- 3.1.1 Each Pillar of the PPN provides a collective voice for the member organisations within that Pillar.
- 3.1.2 Each Pillar nominates and elects two people to represent it on the PPN Secretariat..
- 3.1.3 The Plenary of the Pillar nominates two people to the Secretariat of the County PPN.
- 3.1.4 Each Pillar can develop and submit policy proposals as agreed by its membership.
- 3.1.5 Each Pillar can establish its own organizing structure to coordinate the activities of the Pillar.

3.2 Meetings

- 3.2.1 Pillars are at liberty to arrange meetings as perceived necessary by themselves.
- 3.2.2 Pillars members are entitled to 21 days notice by post or electronic means of a Pillar meeting.
- 3.2.3 A Pillar Meeting shall be deemed valid if at least 10% of the Member Organisations are represented, and a Secretariat member representing that Pillar is in attendance.
- 3.2.4 A record of attendance and minutes will be kept for all Pillar meetings.
- 3.2.5 Minutes of Pillar meetings will be published on the PPN website, following approval by the Pillar at its next meeting.
- 3.2.6 Pillar meetings will be facilitated/chaired by a person selected by the Pillar.
- 3.2.7 If considered appropriate by the Pillar's organizing group, a non-member may be invited to attend a meeting and speak on a specific agenda item.

- 3.2.8 Motions for discussion should be submitted to the Pillar organizing structure 7 days after notification of the Pillar meeting.
- 3.2.9 Decisions of the Pillar will be made by taking a vote. Decisions will be carried by a simple majority of all members present.
- 3.2.10 In the event that there is a tie in a vote, the chairperson of the meeting in question will have the casting vote.

3.3 Membership Criteria

In addition to section 2.5

- 3.3.1 When joining the PPN, organisations must opt to be a part of one of three Pillars within the PPN: Environment, Social Inclusion or Community.
- 3.3.2 The PPN will publish registration guidelines which will assist prospective members to select which Pillar closely reflects their own primary objectives .
- 3.3.3 To join the Social Inclusion Pillar an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion / social justice / equality.
- 3.3.4 To join the Environment Pillar the organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and / or environmental sustainability.
- 3.3.5 Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Community Pillar.

4 Municipal Districts

4.1 Role

- 4.1.1 The Plenary of each Municipal District nominates one person to the Secretariat of the County PPN.
- 4.1.2 The Municipal District Plenary can develop and submit policy proposals as agreed by their membership.
- 4.1.3 The Municipal District can establish their own organizing structure to coordinate the activities of the Municipal District Plenary.

4.2 Meetings

- 4.2.1 The Municipal District Plenary is made up of all registered members (i.e. of the Community, Environmental and Voluntary electoral colleges) in each of Kilkenny's Municipal Districts – Kilkenny City East Municipal District, Kilkenny City West Municipal District, Castlecomer/North Municipal district and Piltown/South Municipal District.
- 4.2.2 Municipal District Plenary meetings are called by the Secretariat representatives for each district.
- 4.2.3 Each PPN member organisation may select two people to represent them at a Municipal District Plenary.
- 4.2.4 Each member organisation will have one vote.
- 4.2.5 The Municipal District Plenary will be guided by the vision and objectives of the PPN.
- 4.2.6 The Municipal District will report to the County Plenary annually on its activities.
- 4.2.7 A special meeting of the Municipal District Plenary can be called if requested by two thirds of its membership by petition.

4.3 Membership Criteria

- 4.3.1 County-wide PPN organizations will register for the municipal district where their County head office is located.

5 Secretariat

5.1 Role

- 5.1.1 The Secretariat is answerable to the County Plenary.
- 5.1.2 The Secretariat will ensure that procedures for elections are adhered to.
- 5.1.3 The Secretariat will act as a support to PPN representatives on Council and other committees.
- 5.1.4 The Secretariat will develop and oversee a work-plan for the PPN and carry out reviews as appropriate.
- 5.1.5 The Secretariat can make decisions in relation to the effective day to day running of the PPN, in adherence to the objectives set out in section 2.

- 5.1.6 The Secretariat shall establish appropriate sub-committees/task groups or other sub-structures to effectively carry out its functions. Sub-structures should have clear remits and tasks in order to avoid duplication of effort – the establishment of ad hoc groups that are task-specific and wound-up once the task is completed is encouraged.
- 5.1.7 The Secretariat shall manage and monitor the budget of the PPN.
- 5.1.8 The Secretariat will agree a Service Level Agreement with the County Council, which will detail all administrative, governance and financial conditions.
- 5.1.9 The Secretariat will agree and oversee the implementation of the work plan with the County Council and review it regularly.
- 5.1.10 The Secretariat will develop a communication policy.
- 5.1.11 The Secretariat can appoint and manage staff for the PPN.
- 5.1.12 The Secretariat will devise and implement an annual work-plan for the PPN.
- 5.1.13 The Secretariat will establish processes for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the PPN.
- 5.1.14 The Secretariat will maintain the County Register of all membership groups, a copy of which will be maintained by the local authority in accordance with Section 128 of the Local Government Act 2001.
- 5.1.15 The Secretariat will facilitate the establishment of Linkage Groups by notifying all PPN members and organising meetings.
- 5.1.16 The Secretariat will inform Linkage Groups/Pillars if a PPN representative on a Council or other Committee is not adhering to the Representatives charter.
- 5.1.17 The Secretariat will facilitate the implementation of decisions made by the Plenary.
- 5.1.18 The Secretariat will act as the coordinating body of the PPN and facilitate the PPN's day to day business.
- 5.1.19 The Secretariat will facilitate and monitor effective communication between member groups and PPN representatives to ensure quality input into decision-making structures.
- 5.1.20 The Secretariat hosts elections of PPN members to the Council and other committees through the Pillars.

5.2 Meetings

- 5.2.1 The Secretariat shall hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year. Attendance records shall be kept at meetings of the Secretariat and work reported to the Plenary annually.
- 5.2.2 The Secretariat will appoint a chairperson for each meeting at the preceding meeting.
- 5.2.3 The appointed chairperson will liaise with PPN staff to set the agenda for subsequent Secretariat meetings.
- 5.2.4 The quorum for all meetings of the Secretariat shall be one third plus 1 of all Secretariat members.
- 5.2.5 Notice for meetings along with agenda should be circulated to members no less than 10 days prior to the date of the meeting.
- 5.2.6 All members can suggest items for the agenda up to 7 days before the meeting takes place.
- 5.2.7 Minutes of all meetings must be adopted by members, signed by the appointed chairperson (for the meeting) and a copy kept on file.
- 5.2.8 The signed minutes will be published on the Kilkenny PPN website.
- 5.2.9 Where possible, decisions of the Secretariat will be taken by consensus, but in the event of a vote being required, decisions will be carried by a simple majority of all members present.
- 5.2.10 In the case of a tied vote the nominated chairperson for the meeting will hold the casting vote.
- 5.2.11 In the event of consensus not being met and a vote held, a minority report may be written detailing where agreement was not reached and signed by all voters on the decision.
- 5.2.12 In the event of a member of the Secretariat failing to attend three consecutive meetings of the Secretariat of which s/he has been properly notified, without sending apologies prior to the meeting, s/he will be deemed to have resigned from the Secretariat.
- 5.2.13 The Secretariat of the PPN will remain in place for a period of 3 years since elected.
- 5.2.14 Elections for the Secretariat will be held within a month of the end of the 3 year term.

5.3 Membership Criteria

- 5.3.1 The Secretariat shall be made up of 10 members, 2 from each of the Pillars and one from each Municipal District and Secretariat members will be elected by the County Plenary.

- 5.3.2 For the purposes of the election to the Secretariat, each PPN member organisation is entitled to nominate one person for their Municipal District and one person for their Pillar.

6 Linkage Groups

6.1 Purpose and establishment

- 6.1.1 Linkage Groups will be formed to deal with specific issues and support PPN representatives in their role on the Council and other committees; they will form part of the accountability and feedback mechanism for the community.
- 6.1.2 A Linkage Group can be created by request to the Secretariat from a PPN member.
- 6.1.3 A Linkage Group, once determined to have achieved its objective, may be disbanded by a majority vote of its members.

6.2 Role

- 6.2.1 A Linkage Group can develop and submit policy proposals, as agreed by its membership, to the County Plenary through the Secretariat.
- 6.2.2 The Linkage Group will discuss and debate issues of relevance to the group.
- 6.2.3 The Linkage Group and PPN representative(s) will engage in 2-way communication on matters of interest to the group.
- 6.2.4 The Linkage Group will inform the PPN representative(s) on the committee of its views.
- 6.2.5 The PPN representative(s) will provide feedback from committees to the Linkage Group and is accountable to them.
- 6.2.6 Minutes and proceedings of Linkage Group meetings will be recorded and published as described for Municipal Districts.

6.3 Meetings

- 6.3.1 The structure of Linkage Group meetings is determined by the needs of the Linkage Group.

6.4 Membership Criteria

- 6.4.1 All PPN member organisations have the option of joining a Linkage Group (to link with a specific committee/s where the PPN is being represented).

7 Amendments to the Constitution

- 7.1.1 Future amendments to the PPN Constitution shall be taken by decision of the County Plenary (as per clauses 2.2.12, 2.2.13).
- 7.1.2 A proposal to make an amendment to a Constitution can be made by the Secretariat or by a collective of three member organisations.
- 7.1.3 Proposals to amend the Constitution should be submitted to the Secretariat in accorded with clauses 2.2.10 and 2.2.11.