<u>LEN & PPN Reps Monthly Meet Up – Sept 27th</u>

Topic: Strategic Policy Committee Share

Agenda

1. Getting an item on the agenda of an SPC (Liam Murtagh, Monaghan)
2. Draft policy on herbicide use in Dublin City - motion to share with other PPNs (Steve Doody, Dublin City) Apologies sent. Draft policy to be completed soon, COT will circulate when complete
3. Framework for sharing motions (Catherine O'Toole, Dublin City)
4. Adopting the use of the WHO H.E.A.T. (Health Evaluation Assessment Tool) in looking at the financial impact of active travel schemes – (Gerry Dornan, Kildare)
5. Further questions from attendees

<u>Notes</u>

Present on the night were 13 representatives from: Dublin City, Monaghan, Waterford, South Dublin, Kildare, Wexford, Clare, Meath, Tipperary

1. Getting an item on the agenda of an SPC (Liam Murtagh, Monaghan)

Reps experience, Monaghan:
SPC in rep's experience is usually a briefing to the committee on various topics through a PowerPoint presentation, followed by some questions. It is not a satisfactory, interactive, or worthwhile experience for community reps. Non-politician reps share the same view.

What the SPC have been working on:
Climate Action Plan: Each council has a Climate Adaptation Strategy for 2019-2024. The council have to act on that and report to CARO. It was briefly described in some slides. Rep asked for a copy of specific actions but was never sent out. Eventually was sent a summary of what went to CARO which didn't actually have a breakdown of the actions, just percentages of what was achieved. Reason given was that it was an internal document focused on internal staff actions. Eventually received a copy for a briefing they were doing through the PPN (Climate Conversation) being facilitated by Transition Monaghan, but was for their eyes only.

At the most recent SPC meeting they got a copy of the most recent climate delivery plan, which is very detailed across the whole spectrum of county council. By asking continuously it was shared was with them.

Monaghan CoCo decided to ban the use of herbicides by its staff, but within four or five months they reversed this due to complaints from residents. SPC had a discussion on this and reasons on why to change it back again. They raised the question of where does the discussion held in the SPC go? They found out that the minutes of the SPC meetings are presented to councillors, who have to note them, but when looking for mention of the SPC minutes at the county council minutes there was no

reference of them. They have submitted a question three weeks ago as to what happens to the minutes. Ongoing issue.

Getting items on the agenda

Of three items submitted recently only two were allowed. This is the learning from that process:

Submitted three items to the agenda. The first, progress on climate action plan, was put on the agenda. Second was a report on the issue of air emissions from poultry industry. Glossed over at joint meeting of the climate and economic SPC. Councillors lamented poultry farmers not being able to expand due to the affect of ammonia on the SACs. The Heritage Officer spoke about this at the SPC meeting and was very supportive of those with an environmental role on the SPC. A more detailed outline was asked for on the impact on habitat. This item was allowed on the agenda.

The third item was not allowed; A discussion on a major plan from the county council and Failte Ireland on a large scale tourism project on Lough Muckno, which was created with no public consultation. This project was asked to be put on the agenda which was disallowed, on the basis that it was a project, and if they allowed that they would have to allow other specific projects to be discussed at the SPC meeting. Afterwards it was found by the SPC rep that there was a Terms of Reference which outlines what can and can't be brought up, namely that the SPC is a policy group rather than a group where specific projects are discussed.

The mistake on trying to raise this agenda item was that it was not worded as a policy item. It could have been included if it was about 'Sustainable Tourism Policy" or similar, rather than focused on a specific project. What drives the project is a policy, and that policy is what reps can raise. In this instance, permission was given to raise the subject under AOB if talked about in broad terms, which was declined by the rep on the basis that after a two hour meeting people are switched off in AOB. The rep has asked that sustainable tourism be put on the agenda for the next meeting, and that someone relevant outside of the council, such as a tourism officer, come in to input on it.

Learning from this:

A) Check where the minutes of the SPC meetings go
B) Ensure that any item being proposed for the agenda is policy related. Put the word policy into your item.
C) Use the county's Climate Action Plan, County Development Plan and other county documents to refer back to when raising your policy issue.
D) It's valuable for an outside representative of an issue to give input at the SPC meetings, not someone from council staff. Perhaps a PPN rep or some other non-politician/non-council staff. This makes more for dialogue and learning process rather than just PowerPoints coming from council officials.

Discussion, input, questions

Reps experience, Clare:
Experience: There is no room to propose anything on the SPC. It's just the council giving presentations on what they are doing. Anytime they try to propose something for the agenda they are told it's not an appropriate item or just completely ignored.

What reps are working on, Clare:

One issue in Clare at the moment is that the council made a policy that they would rezone land for a data centre without any input from public or public consultation. They made it part of the county development plan that they would encourage data centres in Ennis, though there was no detail within the plan on what this included. During the Summer, planning permission went in for it, and it's basically a powerplant; a gas burning power plant to power the data centre which would also take energy from the grid.

This was attempted to be put on the agenda, but told it can't because it's a planning issue. Then it was tried to put fossil fuel infrastructure on the agenda to make a policy about new fossil fuel infrastructure. This wasn't allowed as it was seen as a national issue rather than local. Reps asked if they can speak about the issue at the SPC, but were not allowed because they are not an expert. The PPN then proposed two different academics, and they weren't allowed either.

QU: What was the reason behind the academics not being allowed?

A: Possibly because the data centre is in the planning process.

Possible solution: This is about a specific project/piece of infrastructure. Maybe if you come back to the climate policy of the council. Look at the Climate Adaptation Plan. Under the new climate legislation coming out this Autumn they have to give equal weight to mitigation as well as to adaption. The data centre would come in under mitigation.

This is getting into a specific project. You won't get anywhere unless you talk about the issue as a policy on a county level.

Reps experience, Kildare:
Experience is very similar in Kildare. Before the first meeting rep tried to submit 6 policy documents, not to be discussed, but just to be shared and noted that they would be discussed in the second meeting. They were not noted or included in the minutes from that meeting. Rep notes that there is no secretary that records correspondences from people to the SPCs which is a failure.

Reps had further trouble with minutes where reps contribution has been omitted. Told that minutes are only to record decisions, but by looking at the minutes this does not seem true.

Rep asked through email and in meeting how to put items on the agenda. No response.

Possible solution: In another reps experience, they referred the matter back to the PPN resource worker when there was a sequence of difficulties, and the RW then organised a meeting with the reps and the officials (not SPC but other committee). If it continues, try to escalate it through an action like this.

Rep's input on effectiveness of SPC meetings:
In some cases the agenda is complicated. But the main hurdle seems to be lack of effectiveness and dysfunctional nature of some of the SPCs themselves. Spending your time listening to presentations is a failure, as you only get two hours every quarter to discuss these issues. It's supposed to be a strategic meeting.

Varied success. Some committees are better than others. This is down to many factors; the tone set by the chair, the nature of the topics under discussion. In some cases you may be able to take

presentations as read, but for that to happen the material needs to be sent out well in advance which many times could not happen as they are not sent out early enough. Material can be sent out 2-3 days prior, or even on the day of a meeting, which makes meaningful engagement with the community impossible from the reps side. These difficulties are long standing. It's frustrating that we can't address these issues nationally as a PPN network. Focus needs to be on how these structures work.

SPC Sub Groups – where policy is drafted:
Experience of functionality of SPCs: If you get the opportunity to join an SPC sub-group, this is where real influence on policy can be made. Here they are drafting up policy.

Sub groups of the SPC look at specific policies. Volunteers from the SPC are asked to draft up the policy and bring it back to the larger SPC meeting. These sub groups operate in South Dublin County Council.

Try get in on sub-groups if you're given the opportunity to do so, if your county has them. These could be suggested if your county does not have them.

Asking questions in an SPC meeting:
In Monaghan, they didn't have Linkage Groups in the beginning, but they do have informal discussion groups. . As time is limited, people generally only get to ask one question or observation at an SPC meeting. One way reps are working is to organise themselves in advance, with each rep on the SPC knowing what question they are going to ask at the meeting itself. If reps meet prior to the SPC to organise between themselves they can use the time and their voices in the SPC meeting more productively.

Perseverance is key when it comes to getting reps voices heard. It's a constant work in progress and perseverance is needed to change how it works.

Note on infrastructure projects:
It's the County Development Plan that the planners use to direct infrastructure. The County Development Plan is vital for every environmental organisation to input into because its content will be seriously crucial.

Experience of how climate action is measured by the council:
When council talks about climate action, 95% of what they talk about is within their own buildings, street lighting etc, rather than anything in the rest of the county. This is where there has to be a big change. Councils need to look at the larger county area rather than just their own niche area. One thing that could help is getting county level data on emissions. Even in ball park figures it would be great to see how each county is contributing to emissions. These should be available through the EPA but rep has not ben successful in getting these figures.

2. Draft policy on herbicide use in Dublin City - motion to share with other PPNs (Steve Doody, Dublin City)

Apologies sent. Draft policy to be completed soon, COT will circulate when complete.

Feedback/advice from other reps on this motion:

-   Education is needed so that the decision to halt weeding is not ultimately reversed by feedback from residents

3. Framework for sharing motions (Catherine O'Toole, Dublin City)

It's come up a few times between SPC reps from different counties that we'd like to share motions with each other. The idea would be that motions which are already written by one county's SPC committee reps could be accessed by reps in other counties to use as a draft for their own motion on a mutual topic of interest.

Thoughts/feedback sought on this idea

-   It could be something that could be done through the Secretariat Network, or may be something that is already feasible through the Resource Workers network.
-   A contact for whoever was driving the original motion would be good so that reps can get in touch with those who wrote it and worked on getting it through
-   Being able to meet up with other reps representing the same Pillar nationally to discuss what they are doing and how they are putting through motions would be helpful

Discussion on raising motions within the SPC:
Comment: No process documented for the raising of a motion on an SPC. Is there such a document? For some, the concept of raising motions is foreign, as it's just not something that seems achievable. Motions are raised at council level but how do PPN reps raise them? This is something that could differ in each county, so most likely to get an answer through your own Resource Worker or other members of the SPC.

Idea for tackling issues:
In South Dublin they held a meeting of their reps and members of the council who were involved in the different committees. The reps then spoke their challenges and direct questions to these council representatives. Idea: Ask your Resource Worker if there is a possibility to have a reps meeting with those involved in the council, and hopefully it can lead to progress on these issues.

This could also help in speaking directly to the council rather than have everything go through the Resource Worker. If they see a larger group of people speaking directly to them it could have a greater impact than being passed through one person.

SPC Work Programmes:
The Work Programme for SPCs is also important as people can see what is being planned for discussion. A work programme are the tasks that the SPC are going to consider during the coming year/life of the council. There is one in Kildare Transport SPC, though there is none in Monaghan and elsewhere. They may have one themselves in the council but it may not be shared with the SPC. This is something that could be sought. In the South Dublin Housing SPC there was mention of it at the beginning of the year, but not discussed or agreed with the members of the SPC.

4. Adopting the use of the WHO H.E.A.T. (Health Evaluation Assessment Tool) in looking at the financial impact of active travel schemes – (Gerry Dornan, Kildare)

We have a goal of decarbonising transport by 2050. At the moment, the census records everyone's mode of travel every five years, but this isn't a sensitive enough measurement to drive changes in a local authority.

The HEAT tool is basically a spreadsheet - you put in the number of people and how far they will walk or cycle and it works out the costs. It calculates health related costs, estimating the value of reduced mortality that comes from walking and cycling.

Traditionally, road engineers would have quantified a new road by saving time and the costs associated with that. This tool can provide a balance to that method of estimating value.

Cyclist.ie and cycling campaigners have tried to persuade the Dept of Transport to introduce it, and also mentioned it in public consultations.

It's a simple tool that all local authorities could implement. See the motion below (page 7) from Kildare Transport SPC. This could be of interest to other counties' Environment and/or Transport SPCs, as successful implementation of this tool would provide a more accurate lens to view the benefits of walking and cycling infrastructure.

More information on the HEAT tool can be found at the following links:

https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/352963/Heat.pdf

https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/Transport-and-health/activities/guidance-and-tools/health-economic-assessment-tool-heat-for-cycling-and-walking

Impact of Active Travel Schemes
23/09/2020

Introduction

Planning for the future should involve measuring current levels of traffic, making predictions on future levels and assessing its impact.

Context

This has been normal practice for decades in the design of roads for motorised traffic where a Traffic Impact Assessment can run to several hundred pages with computer analysis assessing every junction.

In countries with high levels of cycling, equivalent procedures are carried out for bicycle schemes. In Kildare, there is rarely a measurement of existing levels of walking or cycling and no forecast of future use of proposed infrastructure. As a result there is no benchmark to assess the success of a scheme or even if walking or cycling is reduced.

If Kildare County Council estimates future usage of new walking and cycling infrastructure which would include modal change from car to active travel, it would ensure that the infrastructure is fit for purpose. The health benefits of walking and cycling should be costed using the WHO's Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT). It would also allow the different active travel schemes to be compared and the ones with the greatest returns on investment to be identified.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Kildare County Council estimates future levels of walking and cycling and applies the WHO's HEAT analysis to active travel schemes