



## **Open Government Partnership (OGP) – 14th Round Table Meeting Minutes – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023**

### **1. Welcome and updates since last meeting**

- Antóin Ó Lachtain, Co – Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Sarah Glavey as the new co-chair replacing Philip Mc Grath. Sarah Glavey gave the members a brief background of her experience to date.
- Update given on progress to date and acknowledgement of work done by members and the Secretariat.
- No observations received on the 20<sup>th</sup> April, 31<sup>st</sup> May and 13<sup>th</sup> July minutes. Minutes were deemed accepted by the members.

### **2. Updates on commitments under the Third Open Government’s Partnership National Action Plan 2021-2023 (NAP3):**

Ciara Morgan (DPENDR) provided an update as follows;

#### **Review of Ireland’s Statutory Framework for Ethics in Public Life**

Responsibility for this work transferred from the Minister for Finance to the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform with effect from 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Government approved the publication of the Ethics Review report and preparation of a General Scheme based on the recommendations on 13 December 2022. The review report was published on 7 February 2023. Its recommendations focus on five main themes:

- A legislative framework for Ethics to be underpinned by a set of overarching integrity principles;
- New specific statutory prohibitions, including on the use of insider information;
- Strengthening disclosures requirements to improve transparency and examining whether the regime should encompass more office holders;
- Strengthening the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO); and
- Post-term employment restrictions for elected officials/public servants that address matters not already covered by lobbying regulation and should align closely with that legislation.

A General Scheme is being prepared by the Department. An indicative outline has been agreed and drafting of the heads is progressing. Awareness raising activities of the review report and its recommendations is ongoing as the General Scheme is being prepared. An update on progress was brought to Government on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023. It is intended that the General Scheme will be brought to Government for approval to publish during 2023.

#### **Review of Ireland’s Freedom of Information (FOI) Regime**

A Memorandum for Information updating Government on progress on the review was brought to Government on 13 December 2022 and published. The update sets out the review themes and gives an indication as to the direction of reform. The themes are:

- A more coherent approach to information governance and access;
- Supplementing formal FOI requests; and
- Improving the request process.



The review report is nearing completion and it is intended to seek Government approval to the final review report in Q3 2023. The Minister intends to then bring legislative proposals, informed by the review, to Government.

### **Review of the Operation of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015**

Responsibility for this work transferred from the Minister for Finance to the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform with effect from 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

The review recommendations informed the drafting of an amendment Bill to strengthen the existing legislative framework. This Bill was published in September 2022 and completed its passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas in May 2023. The Bill was signed into law by the President on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023. The Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas Allowances (Amendment) Act 2023 will:

- Improve the operation and functionality of the Lobbying Register;
- Strengthen the existing legislation and its enforcement; and
- Make failure to comply with the post term employment restrictions set out in Section 22 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act as amended a relevant contravention and introduce civil and administrative sanctions which SIPO can apply to those who contravene the ‘cooling off’ provisions.

SIPO will need time to make the necessary changes to the Lobbying register, its published guidance, and its procedures so it is intended to commence the provisions of the legislation in the Autumn. The Department is also progressing a Programme for Government commitment to “extend the lobbying register so that the lobbying of senior officials in bodies like the Central Bank of Ireland, Comreg, the NTA and the HSE which have significant policymaking or development functions will need to be reported on the same basis as central and local government”. This commitment will be delivered by way of statutory instrument following extensive consultation with Departments and the bodies under their aegis to identify the roles in public bodies to be added to the category of designated public official for the purpose of the regulation of lobbying legislation.

Kieran Moylan (DRCD) provided an update as follows;

- **Progressing civic participation with the objective of further enhancing the proactive and meaningful participation and engagement with citizens in the decisions that affect them**

### **Publication of Values and Principles**

The Values and Principles for collaboration and partnership working with the community and voluntary sector were approved by Government and were launched in 2022

All Government Departments have recently reviewed their Statements of Strategy. DRCD used this opportunity to remind Departments of the Values and Principles and of the recent publication of a guide to engagement of the marginalised in local planning processes.

DRCD is responsible for disseminating the Values and Principles and will be undertaking a monitoring exercise later this year as part of the 2023 work programme.



## Civic Forum

The first Civic Forum for dialogue between the state and the community and voluntary sector took place at the Aviva stadium on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022. A report on the proceedings has now been received and is available on gov.ie.

Arising from the feedback on the first Civic Forum, it has been agreed to develop a Terms of Reference for the Civic Forum and to provide a clear statement of its purpose, having regard to the sectoral for a hosted by several other Departments and Agencies.

The Department is now engaging with the sub-committee of the Cross Sectoral Group on the Government's Strategy for the community and Voluntary Sector to agree on the theme and format of the second Civic Forum, which is scheduled to take place on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

- **Strengthening inclusion and civic deliberation in local decision making for Public Participation Networks (PPNs)**

## PPN Roadmap

A Working Group was established to oversee the development and implementation of the Roadmap of future actions following the publication of the report on the PPN Structural Review in June 2022. Its members come from a range of PPN stakeholder groups, including PPN staff and volunteers, civil society groups, local authorities and relevant government departments. Participatory and co-design processes were used to ensure that stakeholders were actively involved in designing the actions that will affect PPNs over the coming years. The Group is the main forum for developing and making recommendations to the Minister on future actions arising from the review report and stakeholder feedback.

A draft Roadmap has been agreed by the Working Group. DRCD, with input from Working Group members, has now appointed an independent service provider to consult more widely with the PPN stakeholders on the draft Roadmap and make recommendations on its content based on the feedback received. The consultation process aims to give the broader PPN stakeholder community the opportunity to feed back on the draft Implementation Roadmap developed by the Working Group and DRCD.

The Draft PPN Implementation Roadmap along with a survey questionnaire was circulated in July. The Independent Service Provider developed the survey questionnaire to give all those involved in or with PPNs an opportunity to have their say on the draft Roadmap. Feedback from this survey will be used to help finalise the Roadmap. A closing date of September 1<sup>st</sup> has been given to complete the survey.

The next stage of the consultation process will be to arrange meetings and group engagements with stakeholders. Once the consultation process is complete, the information will be analysed and used to identify key themes that will be included in the Roadmap.



A finalised Roadmap is expected to be submitted for approval later this year. The Working Group will remain in place to oversee the implementation of the Roadmap and ensure it enhances the effectiveness of the PPNs.

### **Research on Diversity in PPNs**

DRCD is also commissioning a research project to

- explore the demographic characteristics of groups and individuals involved in PPNs,
- investigate the diversity involved,
- establish an evidence base on the area, and
- make recommendations on increasing the involvement of under-represented groups in PPNs, drawing on the 'Values and Principles for engagement and partnership working with the community and voluntary sector' and the 'Guidelines for Inclusive engagement in local planning processes'.

It is envisaged that the research will involve extensive consultation with groups found to be under-represented on PPNs.

Draft Terms of Reference for the research were circulated to the PPN National Advisory Group, and to PPN staff and Secretariat networks for their observations and feedback.

The request for tender was published on the eTenders on 11 July and will remain open until 8 September 2023. When the tender period has passed, an evaluation group will be put together to evaluate any resulting tenders. The contract will be awarded to the successful candidate and the research will commence in the Autumn.

An Oversight Group of PPN stakeholders will be established to provide advice and monitor the project. A call for expressions of interest in participating in the Group has been circulated among stakeholders.

Diarmuid O Leary – (DHLGH) provided an update as follows;

### **Strengthening inclusion and civic deliberation in local decision making for other Local Authority Committees' functions, membership and procedures with which the PPNs engage.**

As indicated previously, an independent review of local authority Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) is progressing. A Stakeholder Working Group (SWG), comprising of representatives of all stakeholders involved in SPCs, has been established to oversee, advise on and steer the review of SPCs, including the work of the independent consultant who will carry out the review. The independent review is currently engaging with the representatives of all participants/stakeholders involved in SPCs at local level and has begun a series of visits to 6 local authorities to examine the operation of SPCs in those areas. Information about the review and meetings of the SWG are posted to the Department's website here:



<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f96ec-a-stakeholder-working-group-swg-for-the-review-of-local-authority-strategic-policy-committees/>

The review is expected to be completed towards the end of the year”

Victoria Gbafah – (DPENDR) provided an update as follows;

- A revised draft of the consultation guidelines was received on 31<sup>st</sup> July from the IPA. A final draft is expected in the coming week.
- Next phase: Public consultation to be conducted. The secretariat is currently putting together a consultation and engagement plan.

No observations were received ahead of or at the meeting on NAP3 updates.

### **3. Discussion and decisions on Observations on the ranking of potential commitments for NAP4 opportunities policy holders**

The secretariat provided an overview of the process carried out to date to develop NAP4

- The objectives of the Round Table to the end of the year were summarised as follows;
  - Government and civil society, working together to define ambitious commitments to foster transparency, accountability and inclusion.
  - Delivery of National Action Plan 4 by 22nd December
  - Sign off on 4 to 5 commitments.
  - Independent Reporting Mechanism – commencement of NAP3 Review expected – process led by OGP, timeline TBC
- A process overview to date with timelines was presented.
- An update on progress on NAP4 since the last meeting of the Round Table was provided as follows:
  - Secretariat shared relevant documents with the RT.
  - Written Obs/Feedback received on the Ranking of Potential Commitments for NAP4 Opportunities Policy Holders.
  - Secretariat held initial discussions with some RT member Departments.
  - In summary we have heard that:
    - Content from the public consultation is very valuable;
    - Some potential commitments are still vague;
    - Departments requesting additional information on commitment areas;
    - Clear policy owners are needed for all commitments;
    - Some potential policy owners are currently not involved in the process;
    - Good continuing support for OGP agenda within Departments;



- Departments may have additional proposed commitments under the OGP remit:  
and
- Commitments need to be ambitious and feasible.
- Secretariat has created an initial template for the further development of the commitments.

The co-chairs opened up a discussion reviewing the potential areas of commitment that arose in the consultation, and a suggested way forward, where policy holders will generate potential commitments in response to the consultation initially using the simple template developed by the secretariat. Round table members present shared their initial suggestions regarding potential commitments, and highlighted the areas they felt were most important. The co-chairs emphasised the importance of initially developing a full range of potential commitments that may be included in NAP4 and also of ensuring commitments are substantive and ambitious. Policy holders in the Departments present agreed that the simple template was useful and that they would liaise with colleagues in their Departments, and with the secretariat to submit potential proposals for consideration at the next Round Table.

- The secretariat presented the Project Timeline to year-end and next steps.

#### **4. Actions arising /AOB/Next meeting/ close**

- RT Member Departments to use the simple template provided by the secretariat to make proposals for commitments for NAP4.
- Secretariat will approach additional Departments not on the RT.
- Secretariat will engage closely with the relevant Departments to turn these potential commitments into SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, timely) achievements.
- In next meeting RT to review final proposals towards choosing 4 to 5 potential commitments.
- Next meeting: 5th October 11:00 – 12:30 WebEx TBC

Next meeting re-scheduled to: 12<sup>th</sup> October 11:00 – 12:30am WebEx.