



Submission from Sligo PPN in respect of Sligo County Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2020-24

About Sligo PPN:

Sligo PPN is a network of 340 community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups from across county Sligo.

The PPN is made up of three 'Colleges' which gathers the member groups in terms of their interests and activities – these are environmental college, social inclusion college and community and voluntary college.

Sligo PPN exists to facilitate the formal participation by the community sector in Sligo County Council's decision making structures and to serve as a support and information sharing network for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Sligo. It is funded jointly by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Sligo County Council but is autonomous and its activities and workplan are directed by its members through an elected secretariat. The elected Secretariat in Sligo is made up of 9 members representing 2 from each college and 1 from each MD.

Sligo PPN greatly values the immense amount of work done and services provided by Sligo County Council to communities across the county. Sligo PPN recognises the financial constraints within which Sligo County Council operates. Sligo PPN notes that only 8% of all government expenditure is distributed through Ireland's local authorities an amount which is not sufficient to allow local authorities to work to their full potential. Despite these constraints, Sligo PPN calls on Sligo County Council to be ambitious and creative in its attempts to ensure that all the diverse people of Sligo are valued, and that their health, mental health, education, accommodation, transport, social and economic needs can be met within the county.

Sligo PPN greatly welcomes this opportunity to make submissions in respect of the new Sligo County Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and we hope that our recommendations will be given due consideration.

The public call for submissions into this Corporate Plan review was disseminated across all our member groups with an encouragement for them to make their own individual submissions. This document reflects an overarching approach from the PPN and notes some of the priority issues that we have heard from our members over the last few years. It incorporates direct feedback from the Sligo PPN Secretariat and community representatives on the various SPCs. It also draws on feedback from our Health and Wellbeing Vision process. The PPN acknowledges that the SCC Corporate Plan is an overarching strategic document, and therefore some of the content outlined in this submission is too detailed for inclusion into the final document. However, our members felt it important to include the priorities as outlined so that they might be considered into the more action focused plans that sit below this corporate document, and are generated from, the Corporate Plan.

We will be sending a report on to our representatives with regard to which elements of this submission were incorporated into the new draft. They have also requested an overview on reasons why certain recommendations may not be adopted and the rationale behind these so we would welcome direction from SCC on where these comments would be better directed.

We would like to indicate Sligo PPN's willingness to assist SCC with the organisation of the next phase of

consultation and subsequent engagement sessions based on the review of the 2020-24 Corporate Plan draft document when it is produced.

As there was no specific template for submission, this document is based on the layout of the existing 2015-19 plan. The text in black and red are existing headings and wording and the PPN comments and recommendations are in blue.

General Comments

Removal of capital letters in full sentences which make the document hard to read and inaccessible.

We recommend the replacement of ‘Citizens’ wherever it is used in the draft strategy with ‘people who live in Sligo’ or other suitable wording. Albeit unintentionally, the term Citizen excludes those without citizenship which means that migrants on work permits, those who have emigrated permanently to Sligo and those here seeking asylum are not included within this terminology although they constitute a considerable portion of our community.

We recommend a further public consultation on the actual draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 document with adequate time for review and discussion among PPN representatives

In identifying committee members at the end of this plan, we ask that community representatives are identified by both their college and the fact that they are PPN representatives.

The existing actions described for Community and Economic Development are not specific. This is not suitable for a corporate plan as they can not be assessed or evaluated. For example the existing plan has the following:

“Objective

1. Promotion of Social Inclusion and Equality

Actions

- *National Age Friendly Programme*
- *Comhairle na nÓg*
- *Inter Agency Traveller Support Group*
- *Literacy Friendly*
- *PEACE IV*
- *Time to move on from congregated settings – a Strategy for Community Inclusion (HSE 2011)”*

These actions are not specific. Simply listing organisations or programmes does not mean anything. What is the actual action. Any actions included in future plans must be more detailed.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Sligo PPN recommends that this section should include the following:

A section on Community, highlighting the diverse and committed sector in Sligo with particular reference to the contribution they made in 2020 under the unprecedented Covid-19 effort and the official network of 340 groups that make up Sligo PPN.

A specific reference to the housing and homeless crisis in Sligo and a commitment made to addressing this crisis with urgency and determination.

A recognition of the effects of Climate Breakdown already being felt and the likely future effects on the county and its residents and the urgent need for Climate Action including, but not limited to, the measures in the Climate Action Plan 2019 (https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate_Action_Plan_2019.pdf)

Reference to the fact that this Corporate Plan is being made in the context of a worsening environmental and ecological crisis situation. Sligo County Council recognises the seriousness of this crisis for its communities and all decisions being made will be considered in the light of the need for both climate change mitigation and adaptation at a community level.

There should be a recognition of the significant Biodiversity Loss in the county and a commitment to restoring Biodiversity in both urban and rural areas.

There should be a reference to the growing traffic congestion in Sligo town and a commitment to developing and delivering more high quality active transport measures which will both contribute to better health and quality of life for the residents of the town as well as addressing the need for Climate Action.

MISSION STATEMENT

Sligo PPN recommends the need to make strong reference to environmental sustainability in any mission statement

CORE VALUES

Existing

Democracy TO ENSURE ACTIONS AND DECISIONS ARE GUIDED BY DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

Recommended

Democracy: To ensure that best practice in democratic principles are embedded in all actions and decisions and to work closely with Sligo PPN in all policy development as a key stakeholder and consultation/collaboration partner.

Existing

Openness, Transparency & Accountability TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT POLICY IN AN OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE MANNER

Recommended

Openness, Transparency & Accountability; To formulate and implement policy in an open, transparent and accountable manner and to offer timely and genuine opportunities for community engagement.

Existing;

Inclusion THE COUNCIL PROMOTES A CULTURE OF OPENNESS AND DIVERSITY AND FULL ACCESSIBILITY TO ALL ITS SERVICES

Recommended

Social inclusion; Sligo County Council will respect all relevant equality legislation and is committed to the progressive realisation of human rights including economic and social rights which will be monitored and reported on to all listed stakeholders in accordance with Public Sector Duty principles.

Existing

Community Focus TO RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANT AND INTEGRAL ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Recommended

The term recognize is meaningless in this context. We would suggest a more proactive approach to developing partnerships with local communities and allowing them to influence real change.

Existing

Communication; TO EMBED EFFECTIVE, ACCESSIBLE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TO FULLY INFORM PROCESSES AND DECISIONS.

Recommended:

Communication; To embed effective, accessible internal and external communications to fully inform processes and decisions and to provide clear, user friendly information in a timely manner to allow for full community engagement. Ensuring that consultation methods used enable people to fully participate in the decisions which affect them and that their views are acknowledged and fully considered and that they receive responses in relation to their input’.

Recommended

Include the value Partnership and Collaboration; To foster and develop partnership and collaboration with public and private organisations, communities and the Sligo PPN in the development and advancement of initiatives and to maximise resources and investments for the area with a view to creating a living and liveable sustainable county.

Include reference to Climate Change; The council recognises that protecting the environment and responding to climate change are the most significant factors facing our society”

Include the value Sustainability and align this to commitments under the SDGs

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

1. 1. Employment & Economic Activity (Economic Development)

Comments;

- Include reference to sustainable economic activity
- Promotion of social enterprise not just traditional models of activity
- Commitment to the incorporation of remote working to both support employee wellbeing as well as make positive environmental impacts

2. Social Inclusion & Poverty

Existing; To promote a culture of inclusion and diversity socially, culturally and economically in all our activities so as to eradicate disadvantage, alienation, isolation and poverty within the county

Recommended;

The word promote is not strong enough. SCC should ensure that this culture is embedded both within the organization and other partner organizations. Firm commitments need to be made to up-skilling and training to recognize and incorporate more socially inclusive practice.

3. Education & Training (Lifelong Learning)

To support individuals and marginalised target groups experiencing educational disadvantage to participate fully, engage with and progress through life-long learning opportunities.

Comments

- Need to make reference to the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit
- Should commit to new and innovative life-long learning opportunities to match the future employment opportunities
- Needs to commit to also supporting existing workforce to up-skill to meet changing demand

4. Climate Change & Environment

To promote principles and best practices of a sustainable environment and to maintain Sligo's clean, green image as an environmentally friendly county in all its aspects.

Comment

The term promote is not strong enough – recommend firm commitments to sustainable and environmentally friendly practices across all policy, tendering and programme development

PPN representatives do not agree with the use of the term "image" unless it reflects the reality.
"to maintain Sligo as a clean green aspects

5. Health & Well-being (Quality of Life)

To place “quality of Life”/ “health and “well being” principles at the heart of all our activities and to incorporate them as a KPI in measuring the success of the county going forward. We will work to ensure that Sligo is a place that is respectful and welcoming to all, as well as being truly accessible regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and religious belief”.

6. Democratic & Participative Representation & Accountability

To ensure the highest level of accountability in the Council and relevant and appropriate engagement with communities and citizens in relation to our activities.

Comment

Include; To work with Sligo PPN to ensure that all community members have the opportunity to have their voice heard and influence real change in our county.

General Comment - Each of the Corporate Objectives should include some environment/climate change reference to reflect the reality that this transcends all issues.

Strategic Objectives and Actions Section

Community & Economic Development

Comments

Sligo PPN notes that as the Local Community Development Committee is dedicated to Community Development, it would be important that there is a shared understanding and definition of what this means. The PPN recommends that the committee engage in some collaborative training in what a community development approach entails and a shared working definition be included in this Corporate Plan and in the LCDC terms of reference. The PPN would also recommend updated information/training on best practice in community development and social inclusion, guided by the legislation under Public Sector Duty.

Sligo PPN recommend the following commitments to be acknowledged;

- To support and resource the revision of the Local Economic and Community Plan and to the collaborative development of the successor LECP in 2021;
- To adopt the *All Ireland Standards for Community Work* as referenced in ***Sustainable, Inclusive & Empowered Communities: a five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector*** launched by the Department of Rural and Community Development;
- To the development of a cohesive plan to implement the Sustainable Development Goals within the corporate structure and how engagement with partners can lead to outcomes to meet agenda 2030 with the community;
 - To the development and implementation of a people's portal to increase democratic interaction with the council as well as provide credible feedback in relation to services and increased participation of community in their local council plans;
 - To the development and implementation of an inclusive and accessible streetscape that encourages positive use as well as improved amenity value to the community and local commercial uses through engagement and removal of car-dominated streets. There is growing recognition that streets are more than spaces for retail transactions and with so many of those happening online other functions of streets need to be enabled

Objectives

Support and Develop the **Public Participation Network Priority/Objectives**

Sligo PPN recommend the following inclusion;

1. To consult with PPN Community Representatives with regard to best practice in terms of inclusive public participation and to amend appropriate operating procedures of SCC committees to give community members the best opportunity for informing and influencing change
2. Sligo County Council will work closely with Sligo PPN in respect of all overarching strategies and development plans and will notify Sligo PPN directly of any such engagement processes at the earliest opportunity.

3. To embed knowledge of Sligo PPN across the organization and to recognize opportunities for collaboration at all levels across all departments
4. To Support the Sligo PPN Secretariat and to engage with them annually as an organization to explore opportunities for joint planning and collaboration
5. Ensure transparency in elections to various committees

Objective

1. Promotion of Social Inclusion and Equality

Sligo PPN Recommended Actions

The adoption and incorporation of Public Sector Duty Legislation into all corporate activity

The adoption and embedding of the Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service – A Universal Design Approach and staff training on same.

Planning & Heritage

Queen Madhbh's tomb is currently suffering vandalism. Sligo PPN would like to see the Council commit to its protection and more extensively the protection of all such neolithic monuments

It follows from the core value of inclusion that Sligo town desperately needs public toilets. These should be modern, private, unisex facilities which include fully accessible disabled toilets.

Planning and heritage should include the reference to securing UNESCO tentative listing for Sligo's Neolithic landscape

Planning Enforcement

Sligo PPN Comments;

Include a commitment to prepare Local and Area Plans utilizing best practice for obtaining the active participation and input of all stakeholders.

Include a commitment to alter the usual consultation process after draft plans have already been prepared and adopt a process that enables early and effective public engagement that is based on genuine participation and collaboration.

As with the Housing section there is no onus here on the council to require sustainable building standards, things like insulation, passive solar, water re-use systems and sustainable building materials. There is also nowhere any commitment to microgeneration when creating new estates.

There should be no building on flood zones or too close to the coastline.

Sligo County Council should develop a system of measuring the cost of clean up from climate related events and factor this in mitigation when assessing initial development costs.

Objectives – Building Control

Sligo PPN Recommend incorporation of Universal Design principles into building control and development processes

Sligo Library, Arts, Museum & Archives

For some there is a perception that Sligo lacks a real commitment to developing local artists, writers and musicians. Sligo PPN would recommend looking at programmes such as those in Roscommon with an annual writer in residence initiative and the offering of chapbook bursaries.

Sligo Library

Sligo PPN Recommend

- Incorporation of Age Friendly Libraries principles and practice
- Programmes that build on the technological initiatives developed under Covid-19 to ensure that libraries remain accessible and relevant to all generations.

Sligo Museum

It is important to acknowledge other county museums and libraries in the plan and the need to support their activities. Many of these may be dependent on community groups and volunteers. At the very least there should be a county-wide review of all activities to identify where additional resourcing is required. These facilities will add to the attractiveness of Sligo as a tourist destination.

Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

Sligo PPN Recommend inclusion of objective such as;

To facilitate a pro-active economic environment where environmentally sustainable businesses locate and grow and create sustainable employment to support our diverse communities and to reduce poverty, thus enhancing the economic value, environmental sustainability and community wellbeing for County Sligo.

Directorate of Housing and Corporate

Housing

Sligo PPN Comments

Sligo PPN would like to see more extensive references to Universal Design Principles in relation to both LA and private housing and to build up a housing stock that can adapt to suit changing needs.

Sligo PPN would like to see a statement outlining Councils commitment to developing sustainable

guidelines for all new builds and retro-fitted council housing with a view to lowering their carbon footprint using passive solar designs, insulation, water re-use systems, sustainable building materials and microgeneration etc wherever possible.

Sligo PPN would like to see SCC reference a prioritization of the kinds of dwellings that the residents of Sligo need, for example a higher proportion of one and two-bed dwellings as modern families are smaller than they used to be and many people now live alone. This would also facilitate the Housing First need for more single bed accommodation.

Sligo PPN would like to see the inclusion of a stronger and more definite commitment to SCC actively seeking out and reclaiming derelict housing.

Green infrastructure should be incorporated into all social housing schemes as well as private dwellings
See report 188 from the EPA

The provision of green areas and natural play parks in new developments. Greenery inside social housing to improve mental health and wellbeing.

With reference to fuel poverty being experienced by many in this economic climate, a stock condition survey and appropriate submission to the SEAI for deep retrofit of identified in need estates be advanced and multi annual applications of same to ensure full capture of stock within the functional area of Sligo County Council

Rationale: This takes account of the climate change objectives to reduce Ireland's reliance on fossil fuel and economic justice principles. The benefits derived by LA for longevity of existing structures and tenants therein from a economic saving coupled with the reduced carbon emissions.

Reliance on the private market to solve the housing crisis has not proved a cost effective model and indeed has done little to address the shortage in social / affordable housing within the area of Sligo. The PPN would recommend that alternative options be explored in more depth, such as increased Council builds on owned land banks, to ascertain the overall benefits of same.

Rationale: This would ensure that market forces cannot inflate house prices - purchases / building costs for excessive profits. This is in keeping with the department suggestion that LAs identify their own perspective land banks, analyse the viability of same and plan accordingly.

The PPN suggest that SCC analyse and plan for any potential decrease in HAP provisions and seek alternatives to this scheme that could allow SCC to divert assigned funds into increasing levels of social housing stock in direct control of the LA.

Rationale: The HAP scheme has been the go to option to address the lack of social housing and building sustainable homes for people on the waiting list. Should HAP be reconfigured by the department the reliance on this as a measure of social housing supports would need to be looked at.

Sligo PPN ask that the wider AHB sector meetings be advanced when Covid19 restrictions be relaxed and furthermore regularised as calendar events for reporting to SPC1 and wider PPN. Sligo PPN suggest that an annual schedule of meetings be held with all stakeholders at all levels to analyse and review performance against national objectives/targets. Inclusive of this is an opportunity to explore best practice from other LA's to maximise a tailored approach for Sligo can be reached.

Rationale: Utilising alternative means of providing social housing which addresses the waiting lists is a plan by the department. Many counties have already held their initial meetings.

That Social Housing PPP Bundle 3 preparations are underway and selected members of Sligo PPN have expressed an interest to have a greater input into the initial department plans and oversight to maximise a positive output.

Rationale: To ensure that design and planning are in line with desired outcomes and advanced accordingly without delay.

Sligo PPN ask that preference be given to A++ rated developments in order to future proof stock. Where possible SCC should be seeking NZEB (near zero energy rated buildings) which could have a significant impact for the life cycle of the properties and tenants savings overall.

Community Engagement - Engaging with all stakeholders is imperative to include the widest range of opinions for exploration and allows creative cost neutral approaches. However, true engagement must be initiated within the existing tenant cohort to learn from their direct experiences and can shape better outcomes for the future tenancing cohort. Consultation and open expressions for opinions are not the complete gambit that can or should be explored and it would be the PPN objective to make a consultative and engagement process the heart of all potential local policy formation.

Corporate

Sligo PPN Recommend the incorporation of reference to a partnership with Sligo PPN in terms of ensuring democratic and participatory decision making and amending key operational practices to facilitate the meaningful input of community members, especially those harder to reach groups who are often excluded from traditional public engagement processes

Human Resources

Sligo PPN Recommend

- Review current HR protocols in relation to emergency measures put in place under Covid-19 for remote working and explore how such processes can be mainstreamed to support good environmental and health and wellbeing practice and allow for more family friendly workplaces.
- Strengthen the reference to 'Family Friendly' practices, especially in relation to childcare issues facing many staff following the Covid-19 crisis.
- Adaption of action 'Manage attendance through appropriate policies and procedures' to include acknowledgement that attendance does not necessarily have to be 'on site' given the flexibility and innovative work practices that remote working allows.

Directorate of Finance

Finance

Sligo PPN Recommend

Include a priority to proactively seek goods and services through effective and collaborative procurement methods which value environmental sustainability as well as ensuring value for money.

Directorate of Environment, Infrastructure and Fire Services

Roads & Transportation

Sligo PPN Recommendations for Inclusion;

Ireland has commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals.

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Sligo County Council should prioritise active modes of travel, walking, cycling and public transport. This will bring huge benefits in terms of health, climate action and the environment. In some cases this will mean prioritising walking and cycling and de-prioritising driving, rather than existing tendencies to just "add on" active travel infrastructure as long as it doesn't discommode driving.

Sligo County Council should progress the development of connected cycle networks, not just disconnected cycle lanes in collaboration with Sligo Cycling Campaign, Sligo PPN Environmental Representatives and Sligo Environmental Network and the general public.

Sligo County Council should prioritise pedestrians over all other traffic and should use pedestrian crossings to do so.

Sligo County Council should have particular regard for those of impaired mobility in the design of streets and footpaths. There are many instances where the width and/or surface of footpaths is totally unacceptable making it impossible for those of impaired mobility to navigate their way around the town independently.

Sligo County Council should adopt a "no tolerance policy" in relation to the epidemic of parking on footpaths throughout the town and county.

Ideally the PPN would like to move towards increased use of public transport systems to reduce the number of vehicles on the road however this may not be feasible for rural areas. Therefore, we would recommend that SCC conduct a survey to identify what are the hurdles faced by those living in rural areas that prevent reduction in the use of private travel and initiate a scheme that will promote car-pooling. (There is no point investing money in a public transport system that will not be used. We need to look at systems that are specific to regions and invest money appropriately to support initiatives that will work in that region.

Piers, Harbours & Coastal Protection

An integrated coastal zone management should be undertaken using knowledge from experts in this field.

Water Services

Sligo PPN Recommends firm and time detailed commitment to the resolution of the drinking water problem in South Sligo. Where a solution exists only in the long term the PPN recommend interim measures be put into place such as subsidised bottled water or additional recycling services for plastic bottles.

Environmental Services

Sligo PPN Recommendation for inclusion;

A commitment to ensure Sligo contributes at least proportionally to meeting Ireland's greenhouse gas mitigation targets.

A commitment to the collaborative development of a Climate Action Plan for Sligo

An objective to work collaboratively with PPN environmental groups, such as the Sligo Environmental Network, National Parks and Wildlife, Birdwatch Ireland and An Taisce, to develop a greater public appreciation of the significant social and economic value of our natural environment, the health benefits that can be gained from exposure to the natural environment as we go about our daily lives, the scale of the biodiversity loss that has already occurred, the condition of our environment and the very real threats to the environment and biodiversity.

Greater education on sustainability, climate change, coastal erosion and biodiversity in schools, businesses, farmers, agricultural co-ops gardeners, individual landowners, councils and communities

Funding for a database of households that pay for refuse collection and houses that do not to enforce air pollution laws and to address growing problem of fly tipping.

A suggested action - Conduct a thorough review of the impact of privatisation of waste collection on the ability of people to be responsible in disposal of waste. The review should aim to identify what is lacking in the services provided by waste collection companies operating in the area.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Sligo Recommend to include; Climate change and environmental sustainability