



## Operational Framework / Constitution of the Dublin City Community Forum

*(as agreed at the 2009 Forum Annual General Meeting)*

1. This body shall be known as the Dublin City Community Forum (hereafter called the Forum).

### **Objectives**

**The principle objectives of the Dublin City Community Forum shall be:**

2. To provide a platform through which the registered membership may explore, articulate and organise to progress issues and interests that are of particular concern to them - with the primary aspiration of improving upon the quality of life both now, and its sustainability into the future, of the Citizenry of the City of Dublin, in particular those affected by poverty and marginalisation.
3. To liaise with other Community Fora in Ireland and elsewhere in order to share information and experience, to educate and to organise to further the primary aspirations of the Forum.
4. To represent the Community & Voluntary Sector of Dublin City on the Dublin City Development Board and on other participative structures such as the Area Committees and Strategic Policy Committees of Dublin City Council and all associated committees – as such arise.
5. To represent the community and voluntary input into the Strategic Plan for Dublin City drawn up by the Dublin City Development Board.

### **Membership**

6. The membership of the Forum shall be open to any group, club or organisation working on a voluntary, co-operative, or not-for-profit basis, for the benefit of the Community, within the City of Dublin as defined by the geographical boundaries of Dublin City Council.
7. Any group, club or organisation that fulfils the criteria and applies to become a member of the Forum will be considered to be a member once their application (in writing or by Electronic Mail) has been received and accepted, by the Executive Council of the Forum.

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**8.** Whilst acknowledging the special relationship the Forum has with the Department of Community & Enterprise of Dublin City Council and the Dublin City Development Board, the Forum is primarily responsible and answerable to its registered membership.

### **Structure - Focus Groups**

**9.** The registered members of the Forum may organise themselves into Focus Groups around citywide issues and interests, but not on individual local issues.

**10.** Each Focus Group created under the auspices of the Forum shall follow the ensuing guidelines in its formation.

**11.** An application in writing, signed by a minimum of 10 registered member organisations / clubs or groups registered with the Forum, shall be made to the Forum Executive Council (hereafter called the Executive Council) for support to set up a new Focus Group.

**12.** This application should include a frame of reference that clearly identifies the boundaries within which the Focus Group will be functioning and an undertaking that the group will operate democratically.

**13.** In considering such an application the Executive Council should pay particular attention to:

- a. Whether or not the proposed frame of reference is considered to be too narrow or too wide.
- b. Whether or not the proposed Focus Group is overlapping unnecessarily with an already existing Focus Group.

**14.** Having been given the support of the Executive Council, the full membership of the Forum must be informed of the creation of this Focus Group and must be invited to participate in an open meeting to discuss, define and initiate the new group.

**15.** To qualify as a Focus Group of the Forum, the group must at all times maintain a membership of a least 10 registered organisations.

**16.** Groups already in existence who are not members of the Forum may be invited by the Executive Council to register as Focus Groups and, as such:

- a. Must operate in accordance with the aims and aspirations of the Forum.
- b. Must be prepared to register each member group as members of the Forum.
- c. Must operate on a democratic basis.
- d. Must be open to existing member groups of the Forum.
- e. Must be willing to contribute actively to whatever participative structures with which the Forum is engaged, i.e. Dublin City Development Board and Strategic Policy Committees.

**17.** The Executive Council may set up a Membership Committee to examine an application for the registration of a Focus Group.

**18.** The Executive Council / Membership Committee shall examine all applications against the following criteria:

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- a. Does the proposed Focus Group have the support of at least 10 registered organisations of the Forum?
- b. Is there an identifiable issue / area of interest?
- c. Is the submitted frame of reference wide enough to justify and sustain a Focus Group?
- d. Is there an undertaking to act in a democratic fashion?
- e. Does the frame of reference overlap unnecessarily with an already existing Focus Group?
- f. Would the proposed Focus Group be more appropriately sited inside an already existing Focus Group?
- g. Does the proposed title accurately reflect the frame of reference of that Focus Group?

**19.** The Membership Committee shall report their recommendations back to the Executive Council. The Executive Council shall make a final decision on all membership applications.

**20.** A Focus Group may disband itself by a majority vote of the Group at a meeting called for that purpose, to which all the registered member organisations have been invited - with at least two weeks notice.

**21.** Any decision made in regard to any new membership application may be appealed to the next AGM or EGM.

### **Structure - Area Fora**

**22.** The registered members of the Forum may organise themselves into Area Fora, as agreed by the Executive Council.

**23.** Each Area Forum shall have all the rights and responsibilities of a Focus Group (as set out in points 9 – 21 above), when established and accepted by the Executive Council.

### **Focus Groups / Area Fora Balance**

**24.** The Executive Council will ensure that the 'balance of influence' is maintained between those Executive Council members appointed by the theme based Focus Groups and those appointed by the Area Fora (see section 48 RE: consensual decision-making).

### **The role & responsibilities of a Focus Group and/or an Area Forum**

**25.** Each Focus Group and/or Area Forum shall:

- a. Meet at least four times a year.
- b. Hold a Biennial General Meeting to which all Forum members who have registered an interest in that Focus Group/Area Forum's theme are invited and entitled to participate.
- c. Elect a Chairperson, a Secretary and Treasurer at their inaugural meeting and at each subsequent Biennial General Meeting.
- d. Nominate 2 delegates to the Executive Council, ensuring that the nomination of such delegates shall have the written approval of the organisation, which they represent, on the Forum.
- e. Ensure that a database of its membership is maintained.

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- f. Report back to its membership (via meetings, newsletters or electronic mail) at least twice a year.
- g. Be entitled to develop its own Operational Framework.
- h. Act in a democratic fashion at all times.

**26.** Focus Groups and Area Fora will contribute, relative to their frame of reference, to the Strategic Policy process of Dublin City Council, and other representative and participative structures with which the Forum is engaged.

**27.** Focus Groups and Area Fora may, at their own discretion:

- a. Draft and distribute documents and papers relative to their remit.
- b. Initiate meetings or discussions relative to their frame of reference.
- c. Lobby for resources / actions relative to their frame of reference.
- d. Progress issues relative to their frame of reference.
- e. Carry out any business that promotes their frame of reference subject to the aims and aspirations of the Forum.
- f. Incorporate themselves as a legal entity where necessary and still maintain their links to the Forum.
- g. Any Focus Group applying for/receiving funding from an outside body may only do so with the approval of the Executive Council.

**28.** A registered member of the Forum may apply to register with as many Focus Groups and / or an Area Forum as they wish.

### **The Dublin Community Forum Executive Council**

**29.** The Forum will put in place an Executive Council, which will consist of:

- a. A Chairperson
- b. 2 delegates from each of the affiliated Focus Groups who may or may not be officers of those Focus Groups
- c. 2 members from each of the Area Fora
- d. 3 Forum representatives on the Dublin City Development Board
- e. Any Forum member sitting on a Strategic Policy Committee as a Forum representative.

Individuals may be invited to attend Executive Council meetings in an advisory capacity as required.

**30.** The Chair shall be elected by the membership present at the Forum AGM.

**31.** The Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected at the first meeting of the Executive Council after the Forum AGM.

### **Nominations**

**32.** Nominations for the post of Chair must be received by the Executive Council no less than two weeks prior to each Annual General Meeting and circulated to the membership a week prior to that meeting.

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- a. Nominations for the three positions of Community representatives to the Dublin City Development Board must be received by the Executive Council two weeks prior to each Annual General Meeting and circulated to the membership one week prior to the AGM that immediately precedes the reappointment of the Dublin City Development Board.
- b. Should a vacancy arise in one of the community positions on the Dublin City Development Board the Executive Council shall appoint a replacement representative pending an election at the next AGM or EGM called for that purpose.

**33.** At each AGM, the position of Chair and, when applicable, the position of representatives to participative structures such as the Dublin City Development Board and Strategic Policy Committees, will be elected by the membership present.

**34.** Forum representatives on both the Dublin City Development Board and Strategic Policy Committees shall, thereafter, sit on the Executive Council as full members in their own right.

**35.** In cases where a Focus Group / Area Forum representative is elected to the Dublin City Development Board and/or a Strategic Policy Committee, that Focus Group / Area Forum may elect a new representative to sit on the Executive Council.

**36.**

- a. The Executive Council shall meet at least four times a year.
- b. The quorum for all Executive Council meetings shall be 50% of those entitled to attend plus one.
- c. The Officer Board will consist of 6 members of the Executive Council to include the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and the three Dublin City Development Board representatives.
- d. The Officer Board shall hold quarterly meetings.
- e. The Officer Board will also host two meetings per year for all Forum members.

**37.** The Executive Council shall be responsible for maintaining an up-to-date register and/or database of all affiliated organisations.

**38.** The Executive Council shall be responsible for maintaining a register and/or database of all Focus Groups created under the auspices of the Forum.

**39.** The Executive Council shall control, and be responsible for, all funds and resources specifically allocated to the Forum.

**40.** The Executive Council shall endeavour to ensure that any such resources or funding are adequately accounted for by each Focus Group.

**41.** The Executive Council shall ensure that the Focus Groups' input into the Strategic Planning process is recorded and channelled to the relevant City Council Department.

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**42.** The Executive Council will endeavour to ensure that all Focus Groups are treated with 'Parity of Esteem' in regard to funding, resourcing and support - relative to the number of Forum organisations that register with each Focus Group and to the work programme they undertake.

**43.** The Executive Council shall report back to the full registered membership of the Forum, by newsletter or electronic mail, at least four times a year.

**44.** All positions, posts and representatives elected within the Forum shall be for a period of one year or until the next AGM. Whilst positions on the Dublin City Development Board are held for the duration of the Dublin City Council, the Forum representatives on the Dublin City Development Board must present themselves for ratification at each AGM.

**45.** No Officer of the Executive Council can hold a position for more than three consecutive years and it is recommend that positions are vacated on a rotational basis.

**46.**

- a. Where a Focus Group is not living up to its responsibilities or is bringing/in danger of bringing the Forum into disrepute, the Executive Council, on a vote of two-thirds of the members present, shall be authorised to disband it.
- b. Where a member organisation is involved in activities that contradict the aims and objectives of the Forum, the Executive Council, on a vote of two-thirds of the members present, shall be authorised to revoke its Forum membership.

**47.** Any such decision may be appealed to the next AGM / EGM.

**48.** Where practical, the Forum, the Focus Groups and the Executive Council shall endeavour to operate on a basis of consensual decision-making.

### **Annual General Meeting and Emergency General Meetings**

**49.** The Executive Council shall organise and host an Annual General Meeting of the Forum membership.

**50.** Members of the Forum shall receive at least 28 days notice prior to an AGM.

**51.** The Executive Council may call an Emergency General Meeting if a need arises, or if petitioned in writing by at least 25 of the registered membership, to address specific and stated matters.

**52.** Members of the Forum shall receive at least 14 days notice prior to an EGM.

**53.** All members of organisations currently registered with the Forum are entitled to attend any AGM / EGM.

**54.** One representative from each member organisation shall be entitled to vote at any AGM / EGM.

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- 55.** Observers from registered organisations will be permitted to participate in the business of the meeting at the discretion of the Chairperson but shall not be entitled to vote.
- 56.** Any motion to be put to the AGM must be with the Secretary 14 days prior to the AGM and must be circulated, with the agenda, to the membership at least one week prior to the AGM.
- 57.** The Forum Chairperson in place at the time of AGM will Chair the AGM. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Executive Council will nominate a person to Chair the AGM.
- 58.** The Chairperson will try to ensure that the scheduled agenda is realisable in the time allocated to the meeting.
- 59.** A Committee of 10 people shall be elected at the AGM, to be trained as Scrutineers, as Facilitators and in Procedures for future AGMs. The brief of this group will be determined by the Executive Council.
- 60.** The following business shall be conducted at the AGM:
- a. A report of the year's business of the Forum shall be given.
  - b. A report of the year's financial business of the Forum shall be given.
  - c. A written report from each of the registered Focus Groups / Area Fora shall be given.
  - d. A written report from all representatives on participative structures such as the Dublin City Development Board shall be available.
  - e. The election of a Chair, of the Forum will take place by simple majority vote.
  - f. Any motions of policy or adjustments to the Operational Framework of the Forum submitted at least two weeks prior to the AGM will be discussed and, if appropriate, voted upon.
- 61.** Whilst amendments to existing motions may be accepted, at the discretion of the Chair, from the floor of the AGM - no new motions shall be taken on the day.
- 62.** The quorum for an AGM to meet and use decision-making authority shall be forty. This should be revised annually to take account of the Forum expanding.
- 63.** Resolutions shall be passed by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote at the AGM / EGM.
- 64.** Changes to the Operational Framework shall be passed by a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote at the AGM or EGM.

### **The role and responsibilities of the Forum representatives on the Dublin City Development Board (and on similar participative structures)**

- 65.** Forum representatives on the Dublin City Development Board (and on similar Participative Structures) shall be required to:

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- a. Attend all Dublin City Development Board meetings or other participative structures and, if unable to attend, to arrange for the Executive Council to nominate a representative to attend in their place.
- b. To communicate and advance the aspirations and objectives of the Forum within the Participative Structure.
- c. To communicate the agenda, objectives, issues, deliberations and decisions of the Participative Structure to the Forum and the Focus Group.

**66.** The Forum and/ or the Executive Council and/or the Focus Groups will not be bound by any decisions, or policies, of the participative structures.

**67.** If a representative loses the confidence of the Forum (as expressed by a simple majority vote of the Executive Council), for whatever reason, that representative must immediately resign to allow for the selection of a replacement by the membership.

**68.** Any such decision may be appealed to the membership at the next AGM or EGM.

**69.** All representatives on participative structures may nominate a deputy, from the Executive Council, to stand in should they be unable to attend meetings.

### **Voting**

**70.** At the request of more than 50% of members present at any Forum meeting, a secret ballot must be conducted. The vote to decide this secret ballot will be by a show of hands.

### **Focus Groups**

**71.** A list of Focus Groups / Area Fora operating under the umbrella of the Forum will be ratified at each AGM.