

# **SOUTH TIPPERARY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

## **Twenty Eighth MEETING REPORT**

Meeting held: November 7, 2005  
Members present: 61%  
Chair: Cllr. Derry Foley

### **SUMMARY**

The CDB reviewed the challenge of increasing public and community participation in decision making at its November meeting following presentations from Board members Ciaran Lynch, Cllr Derry Foley and Joe Brennan. A Steering Group was established to prepare a protocol (set of guidelines) for CDB members, who have community and voluntary representatives on their structures. The guidelines should ensure a more effective participation by representatives of South Tipperary Forum. The Steering Group will also review barriers to public participation identified at the Board meeting and will advise the Board as to how best to address participation barriers.

The CDB was briefed on two submissions endorsed by the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group in response to the cohesion of the local development sector and the promotion of volunteering in the county.

The CDB requested three local authority Strategic Policy Committees to review integration issues arising from a Social Inclusion Measures Working Group review of services for migrant workers in South Tipperary.

### **1. Increasing public and community participation in South Tipperary**

Ciaran Lynch (Chair of the Local Agenda 21 Programme Management Group), Cllr Derry Foley (Cathairleach, South Tipperary County Council) and Joe Brennan (South Tipperary Forum) made presentations to the CDB meeting on the challenge of increasing public and community participation. The presentations were followed by inputs from other members. The key participation challenges and recommended actions arising from the presentations (including written material) and subsequent discussion are:

#### *1.1 Building the capacity of South Tipperary Forum representatives to participate in CDB and CDB member structures*

The main issues identified were:

- To build the capacity among representatives to engage effectively and to influence the outcomes of the groupings on which they reflect the community and voluntary sector's perspective (Tipperary LEADER Group has approved a significant training grant).

- A willingness on the part of CDB members to facilitate the participation of members of the community and voluntary sector (CDB to develop an agreed protocol or set of guidelines for its members on this issue. CDB members Ciaran Lynch, Micheal Dee, Cllr Michael Fitzgerald, John Devane and a BNS member (to be nominated by Tommy Cooke) agreed to become members of the ‘Protocol Steering Group).

It was recommended that the protocol or guidelines address concerns expressed such as

- Reasonable time frames for consultation – many of the requests emanating from government departments can be as little as two weeks.
- Reducing the use of jargon and abbreviations
- Reducing the use of technical language at meetings,
- Consulting on the timing of meetings,
- Providing summaries of the critical issues rather than circulating masses of information
- Providing resources to the community and voluntary sector to do the job being asked of them
- Organisation itself making a formal commitment to participation (that it is not just token) by being clear on what it wants from each consultation process and the degree of influence which the consultation can have on the decision/outcome. The commitment needs to incorporate a level of response to those who make submissions – if a recommendation runs contrary to a submission, that a reason is given.
- Avoid consultation fatigue – secure agreement with the South Tipperary Forum in advance as to whether full public consultation is merited for an issue.
- If requiring the Community and Voluntary Sector to establish a legal company, to provide resources for the ongoing administration burden.

### *1.2 Increasing public participation in critical opportunities such as Local Area Plans, County Development Plans, County submission to post national funding, etc*

The number of opportunities for the general public to input into decisions that can affect their lives are increasing. Public participation and community involvement are very important processes because they can bring significant benefits in terms of quality and also in terms of public acceptance of decisions. Establishing confidence and trust are the keys to positive public sector involvement with civic engagement being successful for the future.

Within forward planning in particular, participation rights are enshrined in the Planning Act and specified time frames are set. Though there are two opportunities to engage in the process, at issue raising stage and at draft plan stage, the times frames are tight enough. Arising from recent public consultation on the post 2006 NDP funding, there is a need for some pre-development or awareness raising work in areas shortly to be targeted for local area action plans. There is also a need to facilitate on-line consultation within

the legislation – many people are not comfortable about public meetings but will often take an hour at home to have their input by e mail. On line options might also be considered with regard to the consultation on Urban and Village Renewal Schemes.

The public do not have quite the same opportunity to influence other public service areas such as national roads. While the public can input into route selection, technical considerations appear to dominate the evaluation of routes. The public do have an option of legal recourse.

There are also some very sensitive issues for the general public such as Waste Management. Nobody wants an incinerator near them. There is real time emission data available on the internet for incinerators located within Danish cities, which has addressed created considerable public confidence in the technology.

Approaches such as CDB officials groups in Slieve Ardagh (interagency group consisting of CDB members and representatives of the local community structures) seem to be working well. Can these approaches be transferred to other parts of the county?

There are constraints on what can be done locally. These need to be stated from the outset. Arising from public input into the influencing the next National Development Plan, there is considerable disquiet about housing development proceeding too far in front of infrastructure provision (services, facilities and amenities) in the strategic intent to build up villages within the current County Development Plan.

It was agreed that the Protocol Steering Group would also review the issues arising out of the discussion on public participation and revert to the CDB at a future meeting.

## **2. South Tipperary submissions to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs funds for cohesion and volunteering**

Phil Shanahan, Chair of the Local Development Company Network, briefed the Board on a submission for cohesion funding which had been endorsed by the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group. The submission had two elements:

- Consultations and discussions between the companies in the local development sector leading to the development/creation of a county overarching structure
- Pre-development research and facilitation to be carried out in the communities (estimated at approximately 60) which are not covered by a local development company delivering social inclusion resources.

The submission had been prepared by three local development companies – Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development, Clonmel Community Partnership and Tipperary LEADER Group. The Director of Services informed the meeting that Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd had decided, as a result of a cohesion circular from the Government, to

remove itself operationally from the Carrick on Suir area by December 2006, with the exception of the Local Employment Service, which it is contracted to deliver until the end of 2007.

John Devane, Chair of the Community Framework Working Group, briefed the Board on the submission for volunteering resources which had been endorsed by the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group. The submission has three key actions:

- Countywide training, support and placement programme
- Volunteer promotional campaign using local media and direct mail
- Facilitating employer supported volunteering projects.

Members of the Community Framework Working Group have spent almost €76,000 to date in activities within the current volunteer development action plan and hope to raise over €200,000 to implement the plan in the 2006-2008 period.

### **3. Other Information**

Fionuala McGeever, Chair, Social Inclusion Measures Working Group (SIM), briefed the Board on the outcomes of a review of services for migrant workers which had been held at the SIM meeting earlier in the afternoon. Two specific sets of needs were identified by SIM:

- ❑ Co-ordinate the preparation of a set of induction materials in prioritized languages to enable migrant workers and their families live in South Tipperary. It is hoped the induction materials will address common situations such as work entitlements, driving licences, securing accommodation, enrolling in school, going to a doctor, opening a credit union account, transferring money back to the home country, etc. (Tipperary Citizens Information service has agreed to lead an action with regard to induction material co-ordination and may have support from the Irish Emigrant Council through Comhairle).
- ❑ Need for a lead stakeholder to begin the process which will address the challenge of migrant worker/family integration in South Tipperary.

The numbers of migrant workers in the County are significant, with 1800 in the Cahir Garda area alone. Numbers in the County are expected to reach 9000 within a few years. Access to information is a major difficulty, as the opening hours of public services such as libraries often do not suit the migrant worker. Communication with people who may low/no competency in English is a difficulty for service providers.

The timeliness of the integration challenge is particularly apt given the current riots in France and also the economic imperative discussed at the previous CDB meeting of addressing the tightening labour market.

Board members, Cllr Derry Foley and Joe Brennan, shared their experiences as migrant workers in the United States and in Australia. Economic vibrancy is a major factor in achieving integration. Without an economic driver, social issues come to the fore especially if the accommodation needs of migrant workers have been met through ghettos. It was also noted that migrant workers from the same countries may have enormous cultural differences, which have the potential to lead the violence if the underlying economic situation is not good.

It was agreed to request the Chairs of the County Council's Economic, Housing and Cultural Strategic Policy Committees to review the local policy implications of migrant worker integration and to advise the CDB/SIM on an action plan to achieve migrant worker integration in South Tipperary.