

SOUTH TIPPERARY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Twenty Fourth Meeting Report

Meeting held: November 1, 2004
Members present: (65% of members)
Chair: Cllr Mattie McGrath

SUMMARY

The implementation of the County Cultural Programme is proceeding well.

A review of the operation of the South Tipperary County Development Plan highlighted the issue of making progress or lack of progress, in achieving the goals of the County Strategy, more visible to both members of the Board and the citizens they serve. It was recommended to make the annual action plan more specific in terms of key collaborative actions that require the input of the Board, the level of commitment at both strategic and operational level of CDB members and indicators of achievement. It was also recommended that the 2004 annual report focus on progress and lack of progress in achieving specific goals.

1. Cultural Watch

Cllr Michael Fitzgerald, Chair, Cultural Programme Management Group presented a progress report on cultural co-ordination in the county. The key points in the presentation were:

- The implementation of the County Cultural Programme is proceeding well. A county cultural website was developed in 2004. The main cultural providers are providing outreach services and working co-operatively to ensure better delivery of their services.
- During 2004, the County Council approved the County Heritage Plan; the Regional Crafts Centre continues to oversee the implementation of the County Crafts Strategy; the VEC established a shadow sports partnership which is currently preparing a sports plan for the county; and the County Council has appointed an Arts Facilitator to support the sector.
- With regard to social inclusion, the County Museum is preparing a Traveller history exhibition, and the Cultural Programme Management Group will participate in the SIM review of services to migrant workers.

Key points in the discussion arising from the presentation included:

- The tremendous contribution of the amateur groups in the county in advancing performing and visual arts was noted.
- The piloting of a rural arts initiative resourced by Tipperary LEADER was welcomed.
- Representatives of the local authority sector highlighted the different approach to supporting arts in South Tipperary and stated satisfaction with the model which had evolved as it focused in delivering resources to service provision.

2. Review of the Operation of the South Tipperary County Development Board

Four Board members (Tommy Cooke, Ciaran Lynch, Brigid O’Keeffe and Cllr Mattie McGrath) made formal presentations on this topic.

Tommy Cooke on behalf of the Local Development sector highlighted the following points:

- The local development sector remains committed to the CDB process and is encouraged by its achievements in South Tipperary.
- In terms of resources, the local development sector accepts that many actions arising from the CDB strategy require its involvement. But arising from this involvement, there is a clear need to streamline the number of meetings held because of a limitation of both staff and voluntary resources in the sector. Consideration should be given to resource the voluntary members of local development companies in participating in the CDB process.
- A need to bear in mind is the differing capacities of community and voluntary groups participating in the process. The capacity needs to be assessed in the early stages of any project and the necessary supports put in place.
- There should also be room at the County Development Board table for organizations who are highly influential in the development of the County such as Bus Eireann, Iarnroid Eireann, the ESB, the Heritage Services, etc.

Ciaran Lynch on behalf of the State Agency sector highlighted the following points:

- The key strategic social, economic and cultural goals outlined in the County Strategy do not require significant work in the forthcoming review. The review may require the setting of targets and indicators so that progress or lack of progress can be more easily identified. Indicators should be divided into those that the CDB can directly influence and those which reflect how the county as a whole is doing.

- The annual action plan should be amended to identify: actions that cannot happen without collaboration and that require input from the CDB; actions that are linked to the key goals set out by the Board; members of the CDB or associated bodies willing to take on responsibility for convening individual action groups; the inclusion of regional collaborative actions; and indicators of achievement.
- The mechanisms for implementation require a real commitment at both the strategic and operational level within organizations. The commitment would be helped by a clear context in which the members could report back/from their own organizations. The CDB could monitor the allocation of identified resources by each organization to these processes. Decisions to be made by the CDB should be flagged in advance.
- The CDB should also check consistency of all plans of its members and not just those in the local development sector that are required to submit their plans to the CDB. The report from members should highlight how they took the CDB strategy into account and also include difficulties if any.

Bridget O’Keeffe on behalf of the Social Partner sector highlighted the following points:

- Some questions that arise. What is really progressing and in what direction from the strategy? How visible is real progress for people who are part of the process and for people outside it? How many under-resourced families have a better quality of life because of some of the decisions that the County Development Board makes?
- The organization of CDB meetings facilitates participation. However, an induction pack would be helpful for new members.
- It is very difficult to keep tabs on all the committees appointed by the CDB, what their role is, their membership and what progression is happening. The Annual Report might also map progression or lack of progression in geographical areas. Making progression more visible would in turn lead to better integration, co-operation, clarity, action and accountability to the bigger picture.
- A concern at CDB meetings is that while there are good inputs, there is little discussion. Everyone cannot agree with everybody else all of the time. Challenges are best solved only with the active involvement of all stakeholders. The experience of the Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Working Group suggests that the CDB is ready to move on to a higher level. The issue focus of SIM is excellent and puts a more personal value on the various realities being addressed by the County Strategy. Challenges encountered along the way may need to be recorded as they could provide a basis for future workshops on cultural diversity and civic spirit.

- The Social Partner engagement with the CDB has not reached its potential. The Trade Unions have a difficulty about attending meetings. The business sector could have a more significant input if it worked together. Now that Chambers of Commerce have begun to meet together, there is hope that the concerns of their members can be effectively brought to the table. The Farming Pillar has had a big input to the CDB. Its representative made an important contribution in bringing rural issues to the table. This contribution is visible to its members because of the rural transport initiative. Now that the Farming Pillar is meeting formally, their input will be further enhanced. The voluntary and community partner represented by South Tipperary Forum has been the most active social partner in the CDB processes with representation on 30 associated structures. The Forum has also been active in leading a range of initiatives, the most recent being the publication of a Training and Development handbook.
- It would be useful if the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs was also represented at the CDB table.

The Chair, Cllr Mattie McGrath on behalf of the Local Authority sector highlighted the following points:

- Some of the CDB actions, such as the rural transport action, are having a huge impact in South Tipperary. There is also good visibility in actions such as the Rural Arts Initiative and the implementation of the County Playground policy which addressed and resolved a major insurance concern.
- Many of the members of the CDB have played a vital role in the process to date. The contribution of the Local Development Sector and the South Tipperary Forum has been immense. The Local Authorities too have played their part across all four programmes.
- As Chair of the CDB, any requests arising from the review of the operation of the CDB will be facilitated.

Key points in the discussion arising from the four presentations included:

- New representatives have had differing experiences. On the one hand reports and documentation are excellent and there is a good opportunity to get to know other key stakeholders in the development of the county. This is particularly useful as more and more issues being addressed by individual agencies are cross-cutting or require additional resources which could be delivered by another CDB member. Involvement in actions highlight some of the good work going on at ground level and is also constructive for member engagement. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand what power the CDB has and how the new representative can contribute more effectively.

It is difficult to link the specifics of the actions with the overall strategy and the suggestion to report on targets and deliverables of each goal in the County Strategy could help. Also a one page summary of why the CDB exists and what it is trying to achieve would be useful.

- It is a good time to review the operation of the CDB and especially if the CDB has had any impact in delivering real value to the quality of life of those who are worst off in the county.
- The whole process of partnership has been new for some members. The experience of those who have been involved since the mid 1990's with the County Strategy Group has been excellent in developing a process which works well. The process raises issues which can be addressed collaboratively and inter-agency linkages can lead to better practice and ultimately to better services. The challenge is how can partnership work better for members.
- It can be difficult for regional bodies to bring resources to the table because of national priorities. But there is an advantage in involvement in that county priorities and issues can be fed back into national structures. The context for the feedback has disimproved because the Task Force is not meeting at national level and the suggestion to invite the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs might address that gap.

3. Other Information

- The Community Framework Working Group has been subsumed into the Local Agenda 21 Programme Management Group.
- A monthly community newsletter has been launched in Tipperary Town.
- The Local Development Companies have begun a process of preparing the ground for the delivery of local development company services post 2006.
- Celine McHugh is the new IDA Ireland nominee and Tom Ryan is the new Farming Pillar nominee to South Tipperary County Development Board.