

SOUTH TIPPERARY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

SEVENTEENTH MEETING REPORT

Meeting held: July 7, 2003
Members present: 20 (69%)
Chair: Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald.

SUMMARY

The County Development Board reviewed how it is moving forward with the Local Agenda 21 wheel which concerns the provision of services and infrastructure at the levels of household, village, small town county town and region. The main points highlighted in the review were:

- The need to maximise local involvement in the provision of services and infrastructure
- The need for more integration and networking at community level and also between communities
- Continuity of funding is a critical issue in terms of community service provision
- The need to input into the Regional Planning Guidelines to ensure that objectives within the County's economic strategies are included.

Decision: Two reports presented by the Community Framework Working Group were **adopted** by the County Development Board: 'A Framework for promoting volunteering in South Tipperary' and 'Integrated Area Planning in South Tipperary'.

Decision: A recommendation from the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group that Department of Education's Regional representatives prioritise 'addressing early school leaving' as the main focus of their work with South Tipperary CDB and take an active role in the evolution of a new County Working Group which will co-ordinate actions targeting early school leaving in the county was **adopted**.

Decision: A new action was adopted as part of the County Social Strategy:

Action: 2.3.6 Preparation and implementation of regional and local strategies to reduce dependence on drugs (Lead Stakeholders: South Tipperary Drugs Committee/Regional Drugs Task Force).

The Network of Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres (Action 2.2.6) has prepared a Social Inclusion Profile of South Tipperary.

Alan Curtis is the new Chair of the County Childcare Committee and will now represent the County Childcare Committee on the County Development Board. Deirdre Cowan will replace Alan Curtis as the Clonmel Community partnership nominee to the CDB.

1. Local Agenda 21 Wheel Review

The County Development Board reviewed how it is moving forward with the Local Agenda 21 wheel which concerns the provision of services and infrastructure at the levels of household, village, small town county town and region.

Ann Ryan (deputizing for Cllr Brendan Griffin) outlined the progress in relation to utilizing the local agenda wheel across a range of spokes on the wheel. The principle of the wheel had been applied in the County Economic Strategy, the County Retail Strategy, as well as in forthcoming draft plans such as the County Development Plan and the County Heritage plan. Members of South Tipperary Forum led by the Community Games organizations and supported by the IT section of South Tipperary County Council had begun the process of identifying the existing level of community services and facilities in the county.

Many published plans do not include audits on the existing level of service and infrastructure provision or the required level of service. While this situation is changing, there is a need to keep emphasizing the importance of applying the Local Agenda 21 Wheel when all CDB member bodies are preparing plans for the future.

In response, Board members from Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development, Gardai Síochana, County Enterprise Board, Enterprise Ireland, South Tipperary County Council, South Tipperary Forum, South East Tourism, the Business Pillar and the Urban Council Pillar outlined issues relevant to various spokes of the Local Agenda 21 Wheel. The following challenges were identified:

- The need to maximise local involvement in the provision of services and infrastructure. The rural transport pilot projects in South Tipperary, for example, have highlighted that there is much better value for public resources expended because of strong local involvement in route development and promotion. At a time of public resource constraints, the need to get better utilization of those resources is paramount. Local consultation in terms of identifying additional resources, additional ways of delivering services should be helpful. However, a challenge will be how to meaningfully consult, where public service providers have severe restrictions with regard to resources. It **was agreed** that a good starting point was to let people know what the restrictions actually were. It was **also agreed** that the County Development Board become more proactive in terms of supporting its members cases for additional resources.
- The need for more integration and networking at community level and also between communities. Where a community has an umbrella body or network, it is easier for both the South Tipperary Forum and the other members of the County Development Board to engage with that community. It also makes it easier to bring strategic issues on the agenda. A key question is whether each village needs

the same level of facilities and whether there is scope for more co-operation between villages in the provision of facilities.

- Continuity of funding is a critical issue in terms of community service provision. It is exceptionally difficult to plan when the goalposts keep changing. Communities almost have to be opportunistic – currently there is considerable support for childcare facilities/services. An integrated approach to development or to an initiative needs a changed policy environment beyond the scope of an individual County Development Board. The challenge facing the CDB members is how to encourage communities to be opportunistic but on the basis of local integrated plans. This challenge would be addressed later in the meeting by the Community Framework Working Group.
- In encouraging groups to plan, good advice in relation to practical common issues (such as planning disabled access) would be most helpful. Provision of ‘a where to access good advice service’ could be reviewed by the Local Agenda 21 Programme Management Group.
- While the enterprise zone strategy (industrial parks, enterprise centres) was consistent with the local agenda 21 wheel, there is a challenge to be more imaginative in attracting investment to meet the needs at county town, small town and where appropriate village level. There is increasing demand for more limited public funding supporting initiatives such as enterprise centre development (in 2002-2003 a demand for €18 million for a public budget of €2.8 million). However the county has been successful with regard to major infrastructure projects relating water and sewage (€50 million contract signed) and the Cashel by-pass (€40 million).
- The regional level is going to be of enormous importance to South Tipperary. Currently the South East Regional Authority (SERA) is preparing regional planning guidelines which will link the National Spatial Strategy with the region and with the county. An issues paper prepared by SERA has been circulated to CDB members. It **was agreed** that responses to the issues paper from CDB members would be consistent with the County Economic Strategy and also with the joint local authorities action plan in response to the National Spatial Strategy. It **was also agreed** that South Tipperary County Development Board would formally review the issues paper at its September meeting and make a formal responses. Documentation for the September Board meeting is to be circulated to members before the end of July.
- The nature of service provision is also changing with more use of IT technology. In the tourism arena especially, an increasing percentage of bookings is being handled electronically. Another factor which may impact on service provision in the short term is the increasing cost of insurance. This is driving many services to self-insure which may not be a wise strategy, especially in the absence of effective health and safety policies.

- The challenge of determining optimum numbers of services (for example professional services in a town) remains. There is a need for a simpler system of information collation about services – the information is available but dispersed, so that towns can be accessed in terms of the provision of services. Gaps (which are also opportunities for somebody else) can then be targeted. It was recommended that the CDB bring representatives from the major towns in the county together to look at how these challenges might be met.

2. Report of the Community Framework Working Group

The Chair of the Community Framework Working Group, John Devane, presented two reports to the County Development Board: ‘A Framework for promoting volunteering in South Tipperary’ and ‘Integrated Area Planning in South Tipperary’. The main recommendations which were adopted as County Development Board policy included:

- ✓ 4 pilot projects to demonstrate models of integrated planning and volunteer development which will be overseen by the Community Framework Working Group.
- ✓ A training for Facilitators programme – the facilitators would roll out the models tested in the four pilot projects to other parts of the county in the years ahead.
- ✓ Two pilot projects on ‘Employer supported volunteering strategy’ (one public sector, one private sector).
- ✓ South Tipperary Forum seminar on promoting volunteerism
- ✓ To address an identified gap in policy support within the South Tipperary Forum in regard to its members representing the community and voluntary sector on the structures of public and local development bodies.
- ✓ Co-ordination of a County wide community development training programme.

The following points were noted in response to the presentation:

- ❑ The importance of retaining diversity in community development while at the same time encouraging networking or an umbrella group at local level.
- ❑ The need to target young people with regard to volunteering in the pilot actions.
- ❑ The importance of needs based community training in the roll out of the co-ordinated strategy.
- ❑ The major challenge in getting communities to work together both internally and with neighbours to ensure better cost/community effectiveness in the provision of facilities. Members of the CDB had an opportunity to encourage communities to co-operate if appropriate when the communities bid for resources.

3. Implementation and amendments to the County Strategy

The Social Inclusion Measures Working Group (SIM) has reviewed two further issues – early school leaving and crime/security/anti-social behaviour. Formal reports will be presented as part of the Social Inclusion review to the September Board meeting (detailed reports of the SIM meetings in April and June are available from Breda O’Connor).

The Department of Education is establishing Regional Offices to be based in Waterford in September 2003. The Regional Office will liaise with County Development Boards. However, the available manpower resources from the Department to liaise with CDBs is limited and CDBs have been asked to prioritise where the engagement should focus.

Decision: A recommendation from the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group that Department’s Regional representatives prioritise ‘addressing early school leaving’ as the main focus of their work with South Tipperary CDB and take an active role in the evolution of a new County Working Group which will co-ordinate actions targeting early school leaving in the county was adopted.

A Regional Drugs Task Force has been established. There has been a Local Drugs Committee in South Tipperary. It is proposed by the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group that the existing Local Drugs committee as well as facilitating the Regional Task Force should also be linked more directly with the County Development Board. This proposal has been accepted by the Local Drugs Committee.

Decision: A new action is to be added to the County Social Strategy:

Action: 2.3.6 Preparation and implementation of regional and local strategies to reduce dependence on drugs (Lead Stakeholders: South Tipperary Drugs Committee/Regional Drugs Task Force).

The Network of Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres (Action 2.2.6) has prepared a Social Inclusion Profile of South Tipperary and has also identified synergies between the services of its member bodies and the social inclusion elements of local authority and public agency corporate plans.

4. Other Information

Alan Curtis is the new Chair of the County Childcare Committee and will now represent the County Childcare Committee on the County Development Board. Deirdre Cowan will replace Alan Curtis as the Clonmel Community partnership nominee to the CDB.

The CDB Tipperary Working Group, established following the imminent loss of 160 jobs in PALL Ireland held meetings on April 26, May 6, May 30, June 12 and July 7 and is advancing ten agreed actions.