

## Appendix 2.6 –

### Economic Working Group

- ✓ Len Bell, Enterprise Ireland
- ✓ Martin Collier, Business Pillar
- ✓ Cllr Niall Dennehy, Tipperary (South Riding) County Council
- ✓ Michael Hanly, Farming Pillar
- ✓ Toss Hayes, Tipperary (South Riding) County Enterprise Board
- ✓ Donal Mullane, TEAGASC
- ✓ Tim Shanahan, Voluntary and Community Pillar
- A TRBDI nominee
- A nominee of the socially excluded (to be facilitated by Clonmel Community Partnership)

The **initial tasks** (necessary to address the strategic question - where are we? - and assist the Board in formulating a 'shared vision') of the **Economic Working Group** include:

- Benchmarking - audit of the economic service providers in the County, audit of existing strategies, categorisation of clients, establishment of baseline data by sector on the economy of the county, comparisons with the best counties/regions in Europe, US and Asia.
- SWOT analysis - assessment of the baseline data, defining the strengths and weaknesses of the economic situation in South Tipperary, identifying opportunities for economic growth in the county (where is the growth potential and can the potential be realised in South Tipperary), identifying threats to the retention of current industries/services in the county
- Prioritising of key issues to be presented to the Board in the Integrated Review
- Consultation with clients on the benchmarking, analysis and priority issues
- Recommendations on the key indicators that can measure economic performance and change.

### Board input into an Economic Review of the County

Members of the Tipperary (South Riding) County Development Board brainstormed economic issues and opportunities for consideration by the Economic Working Group. The key points raised included the following.

**Need to access up to date economic data:** The 1996 census data on the workforce in South Tipperary is too old to be useful in developing a County Economic Strategy for 2000-2010 period.

No county or sub-county data is possible from the Labour Force Survey. However, it does show that the South East is performing poorly when compared with other regions in Ireland in terms of employment growth and the fall in unemployment.

Sub-county data can be obtained from the Live Register. However, the Live Register includes sectors of the population who are not available for work. The labour force participation rate is not picked up in the Live Register.

It is possible to quantify specific social welfare benefits paid to sub-county areas. Tracking that data over time and comparing it against other counties and the rest of South Tipperary may be useful in addressing strategic questions such as: why are relatively high social welfare benefits going to a specific area or part of a town in the county?

**Need to review current strategies:** There is a need to review current economic development strategies being pursued by the various interests within the county. It is also important to focus on population trends and to carry out projections on changes to the population structure and also to the occupational structure in the county.

**A regional dimension can enhance the County Economic Strategy:** South Tipperary is a relatively small area in European terms on which to base economic strategy. There is an advantage in having synergy with neighbouring counties. Two examples were provided at the County Development Board meeting:

- A 'centre of excellence' strategy - the Greenhouse Plan - developed by the County/City Enterprise Boards in the South East which identified nine economic activities where the region had strengths that had not been fully capitalised upon - equine, crafts, engineering, food, information technology, tourism, telecommunications, arts and culture and the Environment.
- A second example was the TRBDI - Tipp Net - aimed at optimising the potential of information technology in Co Tipperary.

**International dimension:** South Tipperary (or the South East Region or Co Tipperary if relevant) needs to be benchmarked against the best international regions. There is a wealth of experience in economic development and the Economic Working Group should ensure that it accesses relevant international experience.

**Need for balance in economic development:** Some areas in the county are doing better than others. The aim of balanced development is difficult to attain. Larger inward enterprises are attracted to larger population centres and this will be difficult to change. Indigenous industry is more likely to stay in the smaller centres as it grows. The strategy of micro-enterprise development in the smaller towns and the rural areas needs to be maintained and further supported. These enterprises may well become the larger enterprises of the future.

**Tourism:** The two major issues facing tourism development in south Tipperary are the expansion of the tourism accommodation base in the county and the decrease in commuting time to the main air-entry points at Dublin, Cork and Shannon. There is a noticeable trend in tourists accessing Ireland by air rather than by sea.

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