

# Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems

## Report

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### **Preface**

The Government is committed to a major Programme for the Renewal of Local Government. As part of the Programme, a Task Force was established to draw up a model for the integration of the local government and local development systems. In this context, the Government had decided that Departments were, from now on, to avail of opportunities in their contact with the EU to promote in a positive fashion Government policy to move towards a new far more integrated framework at local level post 1999, and that county strategy groups are to be reconfigured following the report of the Task Force.

The Task Force, which was chaired by Mr. Noel Dempsey T.D., Minister for the Environment and Local Government, with Minister of State Mr. Chris Flood, T.D., a member. It included representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Food, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and the Islands, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Department of the Environment and Local Government, the Department of Finance, the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the Department of the Taoiseach, and the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation (see p.26). The Task Force has met five times over the months of June and July, and has in its work met with the four pillars under Partnership 2000. It was able to build on the extensive consultations already undertaken by the Interdepartmental Policy Committee on Local Development, chaired by Minister of State Flood.

Based on its consideration of the present situation, the Task Force recommends movement towards a more integrated system by a series of steps, commencing now. This process would be supported by guidance from central level, and will

require organisational readjustments to minimise functional and territorial overlaps.

The new system, as outlined in the report, will see the drawing up and implementation of integrated strategies for each county / city, in co-operation and partnership at local level, involving a wide range of public sector agencies, the social partners, the community and voluntary organisations, etc. In a nutshell, the Task Force recommends mechanisms and processes which will lead to a more co-ordinated and integrated approach at local level, hinging on a County / City Development Board (to be in operation from 1 January 2000 at the latest) and its work towards a comprehensive County / City Strategy (to be drawn up by 1 January, 2002). The Task Force is of the view that, if taken up in a positive way by all involved, the new system can greatly increase the effectiveness of State Agencies and local and community development activities at local level. The process of moving towards the new arrangements will allow for necessary preparations and learning, by all involved. A number of small but definite immediate steps affecting local authorities and local development bodies will herald the movement towards the new system.

The following sets out the report of the Task Force.

### **1. Central Level Co-Ordination**

1.1 The organisation of business at Ministerial / Government Department level necessarily involves choices on which Government Department should have responsibility for which functions. In many cases, the choice is uncomplicated. Foreign policy, for example, is reasonably self contained and can be operated by the one Department.

1.2 However, many, if not most policy functions simply cannot be looked at in isolation from other policy areas. Even baskets of functions such as those aimed at achieving social inclusion require linkages to other policy baskets such as economic and taxation policies. To have one, two or three super Departments to cover the necessary linkages between the various policy areas is not an option on either political or practical grounds. Still, problems of co-ordinating the work of the various Government Departments undoubtedly exist, despite the unifying influence of the Cabinet.

1.3 Problems of co-ordination have been addressed in various ways:

- cabinet sub committees (standing or ad-hoc)
- interdepartmental committees (standing or ad-hoc) and task forces
- Ministers of State with cross-Department briefs (e.g. Children, the West etc.)

The Strategic Management Initiative has sought to identify cross-cutting issues as Strategic Results Areas, and *Delivering Better Government* has suggested cross-Department teams to deal with them. Simultaneously, there are many national "initiatives" focused on particular problems, particularly in the area of social inclusion. The National Drugs Strategy is a case in point. The National Anti Poverty Strategy has opened a whole agenda of potential "initiatives" aimed at

Lone Parents, Literacy, Homelessness etc. A very recent survey (see Appendix), carried out by the Taoiseach's Department among Government Departments, revealed 72 groups involved in social inclusion alone.

1.4 In summary, organisation of business at national level must, of necessity, involve a sectoral approach - with specific allocations of responsibility to various Government Departments. The issue of co-ordinating the policies developed by the various Departments and agencies of the State is addressed by the various methods briefly mentioned above. The purpose of this report is to set out recommendations about co-ordination of Government business at local level.

## **2. Local Level Co-Ordination**

2.1 Whatever about problems of policy co-ordination at the national level, the delivery of services and the shaping of objectives and strategies at ground level is where the absence of co-ordination is most felt. In Ireland these problems are probably more acute than in other jurisdictions, due to the relatively narrow range of functions entrusted to the local government system.

2.2 For the purposes of this report, the focus is on social, economic and community development at local level. It may be useful to briefly set down the different categories of public services operating at the local level and, in particular, the degree of discretion available at the local level to manage and shape these services.

- Many Government Departments and / or their executive agencies operate from local offices. Many of the programmes they operate at that level are essentially national ones operated by reference to national criteria and not amenable to local variation (e.g. State pension). Decision-making on these programmes, which include mainstream education and welfare, is therefore appropriately predominantly at the centre. Some of these programmes have developed complementary or outreach activities (e.g. the specifically targeted Community Development Programme of the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs). While these outreach activities are supported through regional or local offices, they are still, effectively, centrally directed.
- Area-based structures (ADM Partnerships and supported Community Groups, LEADER II Groups, County Enterprise Boards) designed to deliver on specific objectives, operating outside the formal local democratic structures. There is a degree of central direction involved in these structures, but the essential impetus is bottom-up and local decision making. Somewhat similar arrangements apply in the case of local drugs task forces.
- Area-based structures directly operating in, or under the direction of, formal democratic structures. These include the local authorities, Health Boards and VECs. There is clearly some central direction here, particularly as regards funding, but again the main emphasis is local discretion.

2.3 The major problem with these structures when viewed as a whole is the weakness of the linkages between them. The different agencies or programmes operate independently of each other without an overall vision of how local society is to move forward. Under OPLURD, the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development, County Strategy Groups (CSGs) were established with a remit to secure the cohesion from a county perspective of the various local development initiatives being undertaken by the State and voluntary interests. Within this context, the CSGs and, in particular, the Working Groups which they have established, provide a useful co-ordinating mechanism. While some CSGs have embarked on wider strategic planning, most focus on a narrower range of functions centred on OPLURD, LEADER and Tourism actions. Experience with the CSGs indicates that it is the degree of commitment of the main players to the process which determines its success.

2.4 The question of enlarging the functions of local government will be considered by a Devolution Commission which will be re-activated later this year. While it is unlikely (in the medium term) that Ireland will be transformed to the Danish system of an all-embracing local government system responsible for a significant proportion of public services, there is a need to adapt structures and processes to a more area based and integrated approach. We need to balance the strong sectoral approach at national level with an area-based one at local level. The challenge is to marry both

2.5 What is missing is a shared vision of how the economic and social life of local areas is to develop, a coherent allocation of responsibilities among public agencies in moving the vision forward, and a means for all local agencies and the community and voluntary sector to translate this vision into reality by working together at local level. These issues are developed further below. But first, there are some principles which will have to underpin any new arrangements at local level.

### **3. Local Governance: Principles**

3.1 Certain principles need to underlie any proposals for developing any new model of local governance. These are (in no particular order):

- **Community Development:** The new model should provide an outlet for local communities to be fully involved in, to influence, and to shape local decisions. This should apply throughout the country, but special interventions and arrangements will be necessary in communities with a high level of disadvantage.
- **Social Inclusion:** Much of the focus of the local development agencies and other locally delivered public services is on social inclusion. This focus must be retained.
- **Partnership / Participation:** Any new model will have to be constructed along partnership lines. Local communities, the State sector and the social partners will have to have meaningful involvement in the design and delivery of local services.
- **Democratic Legitimacy:** Moves towards a more integrated framework at local level need to recognise the democratic legitimacy of local government while building on the opportunity for more effective participation by local communities based on the partnership model. This would recognise the reality that local government is the only institution outside of the Dáil and Presidency elected fully by universal suffrage.
- **Voluntary Effort:** There is considerable unpaid voluntary effort in community development and (particularly from the social partners) in some of the local development agencies. It is vitally important that any new model be designed in such a way as to retain and harness this effort.
- **Simplicity:** The functional areas and roles of bodies at local level must be as simple and clear-cut as feasible. There is an array of bodies operating at the local level. Apart from the risk of confusion among public sector clients, overlapping areas and functions give rise to duplication and turf wars. There is also the danger of too much "administration".
- **Value for Money:** Any new model should aim for improved use of existing resources, should set objectives, targets, and time frames, have mechanisms to ensure accountability and provision for review.
- **Process:** Any new model should be performance driven and should retain the principles of facilitating initiatives, of bidding for funds, and reward for performance currently operating in the local development landscape. The process of participation in shaping local initiatives by those who feel marginalised is at the same time in itself important.
- **Flexibility:** The new model should operate with flexibility and be capable of adapting to changing circumstances, including the possibility of new

arrangements which might arise from closer North-South co-operation (which may include an all-Ireland approach to rural development), and also to accommodate different approaches / solutions to different circumstances even within relatively small areas. The established public bodies too will need to be capable of adopting innovative approaches to local and community issues.

- **Thematic and Area-Based Approaches:** The new system should aim to marry the thematic with the area-based approach. For example, initiatives aimed at drugs or the Long-Term Unemployed have to be capable of working within an area-based structure.
- **Local Government:** Local Government must become participative as well as representative. Although there are various encouraging beginnings, for instance in tenant participation and other social housing measures, local government does not operate at present in a manner geared to energising local communities. New structures and attitudes will need to be developed quickly across the full spectrum of local authority services, and staff trained in new ways of responding to community issues.
- **Linkages with Various Programmes:** The new model should enable local agencies to contract for the delivery of a range of services to agreed standards; this would include services for national bodies and for EU programmes. Generally speaking, the new model should be capable of delivering on the objectives of the various EU programmes and sufficiently flexible to accommodate programme requirements. However, EU requirements should not drive the search for a better model of local governance.

#### **4. A Shared Vision / The Holistic Approach**

4.1 A major difficulty for planning and delivery of public services at the local level is the absence of a single template to guide the activities of the many public sector agencies and initiatives operating in the area. The local authorities' five year development plan is largely physical infrastructure / development based (though the parent legislation saw it as being wider). A number of the local development agencies have their own plans which assess the strengths and weaknesses of the area etc. Other locally based agencies appear not to have local plans, but to be pursuing their sectoral plans guided from the centre.

4.2 The problem is that the number of separate plans begin to proliferate, with obvious potential for conflicting objectives and turf wars. This could be addressed by designing one comprehensive social and economic Strategy for each territorial unit - the county / city (see below). This Strategy would have to be prepared through a partnership of all the local agencies and the local communities. Once adopted, all public sector policies would be expected to correspond with the Strategy (especially as it would have been developed in co-operation with their local offices / agencies).

4.3 While the county / city will be the planning base, the Strategy will have to be sufficiently flexible to recognise and provide for responses at different territorial levels - at sub-county or even local community levels.

4.4 At national level, a partnership model involving Government and the social partners has underpinned the progress of recent years. In line with this approach, a holistic Strategy should command support from local communities, the State Agencies and the Social Partners. In essence the requirement would be for local government, other organisational players in the public sector, the social partners and the community to come together to establish a vision for the future of their city / county over a 10 year period (with hard targets for 3-5 years), to be clear how this will be achieved through the activities and programmes of the various partners and to encourage and monitor the delivery of the Strategy. Appropriate structures and processes would have to be developed

- to have the Strategy prepared jointly with the public sector agencies (both the national ones with a local presence and the local development agencies). It is imperative that the education / training sector is fully involved in this process.
- to allow the input of the Social Partners,
- to ensure the full participation and commitment of the State Agencies, and
- to allow input of community representatives.

4.5 While the local arms of the central agencies would be guided by their own central policies, they should also have the flexibility to adapt national policies to suit local circumstances; the degree to which this is possible will, of course vary from service to service. The statutory (land use) development plans prepared by the local authorities should be adapted as required to take account of the economic and social Strategy.

## **5. Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Structures**

5.1 In any group of public sector organisations, some will always perform better than others. The calibre of those in key positions in those organisations will be a critical determinant of this. This observation applies with equal force to local development agencies - perhaps more so since the level of commitment of the social partners and the extent of community leadership are other vital factors. Therefore, attempting to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the different local development agencies is fraught with difficulty and leaves the assessment open to accusations of generalisation. Subject to these caveats, the Task Force is offering the following general comments on the different groups of agencies.

### **Local Authorities**

5.2 Local authorities are important players on the local development scene. They have a significant resource base, spending well over £2 bn annually and employing nearly 30,000 people. They carry out a significant range of functions of vital importance to (national and local) economic and social development. They have very high standards of accountability, both political and financial, and, as the system is designed, a strong democratic mandate. On the negative side, their functions, though extensive, do not cover the full range necessary to provide a balanced contribution to local economic and social development. In particular, their functions (apart from housing, library services and the arts) are heavily concentrated in the economic and environmental fields. In actual operation, the role of the community representative (the Councillor) within the system needs to be strengthened both internally in the system and in ways of working in partnership. The introduction of policy-focused Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) with sectoral representation, taking place at the moment, is an important step in that direction. The SPCs are complemented by Local Area Committees, based on individual local electoral areas (or a combination of these), designed to bring the focus closer to local communities.

Being big organisations with relatively fixed structures, the ability of local authorities to respond flexibly to emerging problems is not well developed. At elected and official levels, changes in organisational culture will need to be promoted to accommodate new roles for local authorities. Moreover, up to now their funding base has been very tight. To a large extent therefore, local authorities to date have had to focus on infrastructural and regulatory services. The Irish local government system is therefore out of line with European systems which very often provide the focus for local community, social, economic and rural development.

### **County / City Enterprise Boards**

5.3 Enterprise Boards promote local development through the provision of grant aid and advisory / management ("soft") supports to micro enterprises (10 employees or fewer) in manufacturing, services and tourism. There are thirty five Boards of which there are four each in Dublin and Cork; two in Limerick,

Waterford and Tipperary; one in each of the remaining counties. They dispose of an annual budget of some £20 million, of which £16 million is allocated to enterprise development. Whilst the Enterprise Boards are relatively staff intensive (average 4-5 employees disbursing an annual budget of £600,000) and the provision of grant assistance to the non-traded services sector may have led, in a few instances, to dead-weight or displacement, more importantly the Boards have been a significant force for employment growth in their areas, having to date assisted in the creation of 11,000 jobs.

## **Partnerships**

5.4 Partnerships are independent companies with a Board of Directors drawn, at local level, from representatives of the Social Partners, the State Agencies and from Community and Voluntary Organisations active in economic and social development. The structure of each Board both encourages and enables it to work in partnership and within an ethos of participation and consultation. Partnerships are also very new. The first were established in 1991 and the majority in 1995 / 1996. Their work is of particular importance because they are the only local development group to focus exclusively on issues of combating disadvantage and on target groups such as the long-term unemployed. In addition, there are a number of ADM-supported Community Groups outside designated areas of disadvantage which operate to a similar agenda. The OECD review described them as "extraordinarily innovative but they have been better at creating new things than at building stable institutions that embody and extend their innovations". Under the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development (OPLURD) they have a mandate to "improve co-ordination and evaluation at local level of mainstream programmes and policies to ensure their effective delivery to the long-term unemployed and the socially excluded and from this experience to contribute to the national policy making process". So far Partnerships have had limited success in achieving this objective.

Partnerships only operate in areas designated by the Government as disadvantaged. Therefore they may be regarded as temporary since the objective is to regenerate these areas both in social and economic terms. One of the advantages of their work is the public recognition of the urgency of this task. The first Partnerships were established under the PESP and, in many ways, the social partnership at national level is worked out at local level through the process, procedures and actions of Partnerships. For many people, this local action gives national social partnership its reality. Perhaps for this reason, Partnerships are also perceived to work "alongside" other existing systems without the traditional democratic controls. This perception is exacerbated by the fact that Councillors are not, as a result of a decision made at central level on the establishment of the original Partnerships, represented on the Boards of Area Partnership companies.

Finally, Partnerships have benefited from EU support, and Irish models of local development have been influential in other countries and through EU initiatives such as Territorial Employment Pacts.

## **LEADER II Groups**

5.5 LEADER is the EU Community Initiative which is based on the "bottom-up" principle and provides the opportunity for the rural community, through local action groups, to involve itself directly in its own development. Thirty seven groups - 34 area-based groups, covering all rural parts of the country, and three with a sectoral remit - have been approved to implement local development plans which they themselves have drawn up. Total funding under LEADER II is about £87m.

LEADER has been very effective in mobilising community and voluntary effort for local development. As an area-based approach, the programme identified and

responds to local needs and opportunities and local knowledge is brought to bear on investment decisions. In general, the groups' boards have a tripartite structure comprising representatives of (i) the community and voluntary sector, (ii) State agencies and local authorities and (iii) the private sector (farming, local business, etc.). This structure has been an effective means of co-ordinating activities at local level particularly from the point of view of the participation of the State agencies. However, as one of a number of local development structures, the possibility exists of overlap with other programmes and, in overall terms, of duplication in administrative costs. LEADER has a broad remit in terms of community development in the form of animation and capacity building and also in grant aiding local projects. In relation to enterprise support, however, the groups do not always have a strategic focus, and implementation of the local plan may, in some cases, be on the basis of support for a series of unrelated project activities.

### **Other Public Agencies Engaged in Local / Community Development**

5.6 The Task Force has confined this brief assessment of the individual groups of agencies to those which are generally understood to be the local development agencies. There are, of course, other important public agencies which are engaged in activities directly relevant to local development.

The Health Boards (particularly their community care programmes) and the Vocational Education Committees are local bodies which operate to policies influenced (and funds provided) by parent Government Departments. Similar principles apply to *Údarás na Gaeltachta*. However, the existence of a significant involvement of locally elected councillors / representatives on their boards gives these bodies a local democratic mandate somewhat stronger than other bodies delivering services locally (such as FAS, Local Employment Schemes etc.). Also, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs operates a nationally-funded, specifically targeted Community Development Programme aimed at areas of disadvantage and a number of grant schemes to support local self-help and community development initiatives, as indeed does the Department of Arts, Heritage, the Gaeltacht and the Islands in the Gaeltacht and Islands areas.

### **Differing Areas**

5.7 Commentators over the years have highlighted current difficulties with the use of different **territorial units** by different national and local bodies. The Government has already decided to move towards a more standardised framework at regional level. Many State Agencies are organised regionally. However, there are also difficulties at sub-regional level. Clearly, if starting from a blank page, the areas that would emerge would be significantly different from those we have today; but even then, there would still be much room for debate as to the appropriate units and boundaries. Bearing in mind the need for a practical and realisable approach, the best option is clearly to adopt one set of units which are currently in use and move to adapt all current structures to these. The cities and counties are undoubtedly best established in the public mind, and are the operational units for a variety of purposes, including local government. An integrated framework at local level will therefore need to be based on these. At sub-county level, the appropriate unit is the electoral area, or a combination of these in some cases. The local electoral areas should therefore be used as the basis to build the framework for service delivery and for interaction with communities (who often find their focus on a parish basis) at sub county level. Using local electoral areas will also facilitate cross-county initiatives in local development if necessary. The adoption of common areas is of great importance to facilitate better co-ordination at local level among different agencies.

## **6. The Way Forward**

6.1 The individual local development agencies and groups of agencies perform an important role in stimulating and supporting economic and social development at local level. In doing so, they aim to meet real and distinct needs. For instance, all of the agencies are involved in a form of enterprise support that is aimed at particular target groups. Nevertheless, it is now widely suggested, not least by the Partnership 2000 Pillars consulted, that there are overlaps between the functions being carried out and the needs being addressed by the various local development organisations. Equally, it is felt that there are other areas where needs are not being fully addressed by any of the bodies. While distinctions between local development bodies may be apparent to these bodies themselves, to the general public the array of bodies with minor shades of difference in their remit is confusing. The potential for competition and turf wars is also present. At the very least, a strong co-ordinating mechanism is needed, but it would seem that some re-arranging of functions and / or institutions is required. There is also much scope for a more developed role for local government in any new system. Experience in Northern Ireland and elsewhere supports this view.

6.2 The ultimate vision guiding this exercise is that of an integrated local government / local development system which builds on the experiences and strengths of both systems. Having considered the workings of the present system, the Task Force has agreed that definite steps need to be taken now in the move towards such a more integrated system. In the discussions of the Task Force and in the consultative process with the four pillars under Partnership 2000, the negative effects of ongoing uncertainty, as far as the future framework is concerned, were repeatedly highlighted.

6.3 Overall, there is a clear need to provide a definite direction and framework for current and future planning and re-organisation. The Task Force thus recommends to begin moving towards a new system immediately, in a series of steps. It recommends a number of interim arrangements to apply from 1 January 1999 (see paras. 7.1+2) to improve co-ordination at local level and to prepare the ground for the new arrangements which will be in place from 1 January 2000, or earlier (see para. 8.1 onwards). The process of moving towards the new arrangements will allow for necessary preparations and learning, by all involved. The Task Force has also identified some necessary organisational adjustments (paras. 9.1-9). The importance of co-ordination and co-operation at central level in the implementation process is also stressed (paras. 10.1 onwards). A number of small but definite immediate steps (see para. 7.2) will herald the movement towards the new system.

## **7. Recommendations: (A) Interim Measures: 1 January to 31 December 1999**

7.1 A Director of Community and Enterprise, with a 5-year contract, should be recruited from 1 January 1999, for each county / city council. Recruitment would be by independent, open competition at national level, with appropriate job descriptions and a balanced selection process. The role of the Director would be:

- to support and strengthen the County Strategy Groups (CSG)
- to promote closer working relationships between the various bodies on the CSG (incl. potential for increased sharing of resources, premises, overheads, etc.)
- to make a report to the CSG by the end of 1999 at the latest, after consultation with all public sector organisations operating in the area, on preparations for the establishment of a County / City Development Board [tentative title], which will draw up a comprehensive county / city economic, social and cultural Strategy (see below, para. 8.1 onwards)
- to reinforce, promote, and guide local authority activity related to community development in its broader sense

- to keep the inter-departmental implementation group (see para. 10.3) informed on the progress made, particularly with regards to the preparations for the City / County Development Board and related issues.

The facilitation of a consultative process will be central to the work of the Director of Community and Enterprise from the beginning. The Director should take on board the experience and expertise of all bodies on the CSG.

7.2 The County Strategy Groups (CSGs) will be mandated to prepare the ground for the new structures, which are intended to be in place from 1 January 2000 (or earlier).

As a gesture signalling closer integration between local government and local development, the following steps should be taken immediately, and appointments made as soon as possible:

- The cathaoirleach of each county / city council will, ex officio, have a seat on the CSG. This seat is additional to existing councillor membership.
- Partnership and LEADER groups, in line with Government policy, should be requested and encouraged to immediately add councillors to their boards, where this is not the case at the moment.

Local development groups set up under EU programmes, be they Partnerships, LEADER groups, or other such groups, shall post-1999 have county / city councillors on their boards.

## **8. Recommendations: (B) Post-1999**

8.1 The arrangements set out in the following paragraphs should apply, where the necessary preparatory work has been sufficiently advanced by the Director of Community and Enterprise, from June 1999 (i.e. immediately following next year's local elections), and from 1 January 2000 in all other counties / cities:

8.2 The **County / City Development Board** will replace the County / City Strategy Group. The primary function of the Board will be to draw up, and work towards the implementation of, the **Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development** within the city / county (see paras. 8.10-16). It would work in a series of steps towards the production of the Strategy by 1 January, 2002, promote and encourage co-operation and co-ordination between the various agencies and interests on an ongoing basis, and monitor the delivery of the Strategy. All agencies will need to be advised to participate fully in this process.

8.3 Given the broad remit of its functions, the Board will have wide representation (see paras. 8.6-9). It will operate autonomously but under the local government umbrella, and will be chaired by a county / city council nominee. The agencies represented on the Board will build on, extend, and continue the work of the County / City Strategy Group, in particular liaising with each other as to plans / initiatives for the county, fostering joint approaches, where practical, and progressively moving towards more co-ordinated planning.

8.4 The Director of Community and Enterprise (with support staff) will service the Board. Agencies represented on the Board will contribute to the Board's process in practical ways, e.g. financial contributions, staff secondments, assistance in the development of specific projects.

8.5 Since the objective is to have the Strategy fully prepared by 1 January 2002, Boards would be expected to quickly put in place the actions and measures necessary to achieve this target date and to build towards improved co-ordination and co-operation.

## **Membership and Structures of the County / City Development Board**

8.6 The make-up of each County / City Development Board should ensure that all major players and stakeholders in the relevant area are involved in, and fully committed to, the process which will lead to the drawing up and implementation

of the County / City Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development. The local authority will be represented by its SPC chairpersons, the County / City Development Board chairperson (a county / city council nominee), and the county / city manager.

8.7 The traditional social partners (i.e. employers / business organisations, agricultural organisations [where appropriate], and trade unions); the community and voluntary sector; the local development agencies; and relevant State agencies operating at local level (such as FÁS, the Health Boards, Teagasc, and others) will be represented on the County / City Development Board. The direct representation of such agencies is important to ensure full participation. Each of the constituent bodies involved should inform the Board regularly of its current and planned activities.

It is important that all Board members who represent organisations with broadly based boards (such as the Strategic Policy Committees, local development agency boards, etc.) bring to the process the overall view of all their members, and that they give proper weight to the various perspectives.

8.8 The Board should consist of no more than about 20 members in all. All members will report back regularly to their nominating bodies, and inform those whom they represent on the activities of the Board. For the process to work, the active involvement of all constituent interests and their commitment to the process is a critical factor. More broadly based **working groups or sectoral committees**, drawing on relevant community, state, and sectoral interests, are useful mechanisms to provide for additional, meaningful linkages with groupings or bodies which cannot be directly accommodated on the Board. While the broad framework of the Strategy will be set by the Board, the essential preparations will in practice fall to be worked out through such working groups or sectoral committees. These will facilitate the wider involvement in the work of the Board, as well as adding local expertise to flesh out the Strategy and establish practical and suitable delivery mechanisms.

Mechanisms for appointing membership of the working groups or sectoral committees should adhere to certain core principles viz., equality, gender balance, focus on disadvantaged, partnership, community involvement, etc.

8.9 The County / City Development Board should operate on the basis of real and meaningful partnership. The direct involvement of the social partners, of the community / voluntary sector, and of the local development agencies in the work of the Board will bring a considerable degree of experience of how the partnership approach has operated to date, and will help to facilitate a process which would see local communities play a constructive role in shaping their economic, social, and cultural future. Partnership is also important for fully achieving the necessary synergies between the constituent bodies, resulting in more effective service delivery informed by the local community.

### **The County / City Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development**

8.10 At present many of the agencies which would be represented on the Board have their own plans. It is important that these individual plans should fit in with the Strategy adopted by the Board. Ultimately, the Strategy should provide a broad framework within which these agencies would operate. It will be prepared with a 10 year vision and manageable 3-5 year targets; ultimately it will encompass all public services delivered locally. The Strategy will be given democratic endorsement by the County / City Council.

8.11 Central guidance must be provided by an interdepartmental implementation group (see para. 10.3), and would include support and overview of the process, particularly on the planning process leading up to the Strategy, as well as a template giving best-practice examples. Such central guidance would take account of other related developments, such as the Integrated Services Project for areas of severe urban deprivation.

8.12 The Strategy would set out the broad framework, including agreed overall objectives, targets and indicators for the county / city, and would identify the agencies responsible for (and their role for delivering on) these objectives. The individual agencies would still prepare and deliver detailed plans, focused on their particular target groups and areas, in accordance with the County / City Strategy.

8.13 All relevant agencies (local / regional / national) would be involved with the work of the Board. In the preparation of the Strategy, their input can help to provide a realistically grounded basis for the Strategy and so avoid wish lists. Equally, the process would serve to bring influence to bear on the agencies to take account of the Strategy in their own planning and operations in the city / county. The active involvement of such agencies is important and will need to be promoted centrally by the implementation group, with an onus on the various parties to participate in a full and positive fashion in the work of the Board.

8.14 The Strategy would be informed and developed in the context of the national strategies in key areas of public policy, including the National Anti Poverty Strategy, Partnership 2000, Sustainable Development, Rural Development, EU Operational Programmes, the Strategic Management Initiative, IT 2000, etc.

8.15 Each agency would be expected on an ongoing basis to proof their individual plans and programmes against the Strategy as agreed by the Board. A key function of the Board is to provide the framework within which the various agencies meet and co-operate at local level. The aim is to ensure insofar as possible that their combined operations are organised, developed and monitored on an ongoing basis so as to minimise overlaps and duplication and generally to achieve a more coherent and integrated approach at local level, addressing the particular needs of the area. There will be considerable scope to develop and deepen this co-ordination process. Over time, the County / City Strategies will also provide a valuable input to the overall National Development Planning process.

8.16 The consultative process will be a central feature of the drawing up of the Strategy by the County Development Board. This process will be as wide and participative as possible, and must be co-ordinated with other similar consultative processes to avoid duplication with other agencies, or community consultation overload. A range of possibilities is available to maximise input from all who might be interested, such as information campaigns aimed at the general public, workshops, seminars, and so on. Special efforts should be made to facilitate the input of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

## **9. Recommendations: (C) Organisational Adjustments** **Territorial and Functional**

9.1 To facilitate co-ordination of State Agencies, there is, as indicated at para. 5.7, a need for **common areas** to be used. While there is no perfect area for the operation of all public agencies, any move towards a more integrated framework at local level must see the introduction of common areas if we are to move towards a more integrated framework at local level. Likewise, there is a need to **reduce functional overlaps** within the same area. For this reason, the county / city, and at sub-county level, the local electoral area (or a combination of local electoral areas) should be used as the basic unit, whichever is the appropriate scale for the particular task. These should be the basis for the organisation of the various local development agencies with flexibility to focus on particular pockets of disadvantage. Generally the objective should be that a single agency is responsible for a particular coherent basket of functions within an area. Overlaps with other agencies should be avoided. These principles should apply from now on in all planning for the future.

## **Enterprise Development and Support**

9.2 Various elements of micro-enterprise development and support are currently provided by Partnerships, LEADER and CEBs. While each would claim a focus on a particular target group, this is by no means clear to those outside of the system(s). There is a strong case therefore for simplifying the current arrangements and basing this function in a single agency - the CEB. To deal with situations where elements of enterprise support may form an intrinsic and essential part of other programmes, such elements can be delivered through other relevant agencies by agreement where this is clearly warranted. The County Development Board would, in time, play a role in devising appropriate arrangements. For instance, particular aspects of enterprise support could by agreement be delivered through agencies such as LEADER boards or their successor(s). The Task Force is also of the view that, as pre-enterprise support towards individual self-employment for the Long Term Unemployed is capacity-building rather than enterprise support, it should rest with the Partnerships where these exist.

9.3 Since these principles should form the basis for the post-1999 arrangements, all restructuring and planning should take them into account from now on. The relevant Departments should proceed on this basis in their dealings with the EU and generally, with the objective of consolidating enterprise support in a single agency.

9.4 To more closely align CEBs with the local government system, the following is proposed:

- CEBs will continue to be constituted as at present, on the basis of a range of sectoral (incl. Community) nominees, as determined by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The nominees would then be formally endorsed by the local authority, in a process which will be consistent with the requirements of Company Law.
- The chief officer will be appointed by the local authority by open competition, on a fixed-term contract. Any associated personnel issues will need to be worked out.
- CEBs will report to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.
- Each CEB will inform the relevant County / City council of its activities on a regular basis.
- Where there is a local development agency **and** a County Enterprise Board, there should be cross-representation of both on the respective boards.

## **Community Development and Capacity Building**

9.5 A complex mosaic of community, voluntary and similar organisations exists in this country, which perform valuable work and bring their commitment, resources, expertise and independence to bear in addressing the particular issues of concern to the individual organisations. Such organisations range from local residents' groups to sporting bodies, from organisations involved in anti-poverty and social services work to local development associations, local cultural, arts, heritage, environmental, and other groups. Local authorities to varying degrees work with, and support, many such local groups. The aim should be to enhance this co-operation and for local authorities to build a better and more focused involvement in broad based community development.

9.6 It is proposed that city and county councils would operate all but their major policy services through Area Committees based on the local electoral areas or a combination of these. These committees would include representatives of the community and voluntary sector. Appropriate guidelines will be developed to provide for the introduction of such community representation, taking account of previous experience in this matter. The area committees should develop a better role in community development and support at that level, and local authorities

should recruit (by open competition) community officers to liaise with their communities. Where an Area Partnership or rural development body exists, it would assume responsibility for community development with a focus on disadvantage.

9.7 The Task Force believes that a special, particular focus needs to be on those who are marginalised and disadvantaged. This needs to be promoted both nationally and locally and could include targeted capacity-building projects. There will also be continued necessity for particularly disadvantaged areas to benefit from centrally supported, specifically focused local (urban and rural) development programmes.

9.8 One **single agency** (Partnership company, LEADER group, or, in Gaeltacht areas, Údarás na Gaeltachta, as the case may be) will be responsible for special nationally promoted integrated local development programmes in each designated disadvantaged area, be they urban or rural. In all areas, a general community support role will rest with the local authority in co-operation with local groups, in line with paragraphs 9.5 and 9.6.

Partnership companies will post-1999 focus on designated **urban disadvantaged areas**, reconfigured where necessary to correspond broadly with local electoral areas.

Post-1999, the aim should be that the arrangements for **rural development** initiatives would see a mechanism capable of combining such activity and that of the rural partnerships, focused on rural disadvantaged areas and reconfigured where necessary to correspond broadly with local electoral areas.

In all cases, agencies would work in co-operation with the local authority's area committee.

9.9 Any adjustments which may be necessary to the current type of Partnership / Leader Board format should be made to take account of the new role, as far as possible.

LEADER / Partnership bodies should continue to report to the Department of Agriculture and Food, and to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, as appropriate.

ADM should continue to provide central support to the local area based structures and continue its role in support of other local groups, but in line with the County / City Strategy and in consultation with the relevant County Development Board / Area Committee.

Local authority representation on local development bodies (see para. 7.2) should provide for appropriate linkage at area level. Where relevant, such bodies, including ADM-supported community groups, should also be represented on area committees.

9.10 Where a comprehensive County / City Strategy has been agreed (which will typically be the case from January 2002 on), state-funded community development and local development projects should be proofed by the County / City Development Board within the context of that Strategy. The underlying national programmes will continue to be developed and monitored at central level.

## **10. Centre / Local**

10.1 As can be seen from the preceding sections, the County / City Development Board is intended to provide a forum for promoting co-operation and co-ordinating the combined efforts of the various agencies at local level. This is by no means intended to initiate a complete relocation of the place of public policy making from the centre to the local. Of necessity, national and sectoral policies will continue to be drawn up and shaped at national level. The approach being recommended should facilitate better input and focus at local level so that policies at national level are better informed and adapted where necessary, and that agencies can operate more coherently when taken together at local level. The rearrangement of functions among local development bodies will serve to

simplify the system and help to reduce the current functional and territorial overlaps. Through the County / City Development Board and other measures, the systems will move much closer together.

10.2 A clear signal from the centre is necessary now as to the arrangements to be put in place for the integration of the local government and local development systems, both to dispel ongoing uncertainty and to get preparations underway as soon as possible.

10.3 At national level, a special inter-departmental implementation group is essential to plan for, actively promote and carry forward this programme - action needs to commence as soon as possible for what is a major undertaking.

10.4 In its work, the Task Force had discussions with EU officials. While these were informal and do not provide a definitive EU position, the view was that the EU would in principle be prepared to work with structures considered best by Ireland for local governance. Indeed, one of the officials felt that as far as the future role of local government was concerned, a much more radical approach could have been taken by the Task Force. It must be borne in mind in this context that a range of EU directorates will be involved in drawing up the post-1999 arrangements. He also indicated that he was glad to see that the role of the local development bodies and their achievements were clearly facilitated and carried over into the new system.

## **APPENDIX:**

### **Committees and Groups at National Level Dealing with Social Exclusion**

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs raised the issue of simplifying the structures for delivering social inclusion at the Cabinet Sub-Committee Officials meeting on 21 May, 1998. The relevant Departments replied, and the following outlines the range of committees and groups dealing with the various elements of social exclusion. A total of 72 groups have been listed. The various Structural Funds Monitoring Committees have not been included on this list.

#### **1. P2000 Working Groups**

Tax Credits Group  
Basic Income Working Group  
National Steering Committee on Violence against Women  
Working Group on the Social Economy  
Expert Working Group on Childcare  
National Anti-Poverty Strategy Interdepartmental Policy Committee  
Sub-Committee on Certification and Qualifications of Childcare Staff  
Sub-Committee on Job-Potential and Financing of Childcare Services  
Inter-Departmental Committee on Traveller Education.

#### **1. Unemployment and Employment**

Strategy Group on Employment and Unemployment  
Committee on Skilling the Unemployed  
Local Employment Service Policy Advisory Committee  
Interdepartmental Advisory Group on the Local Employment Service  
Black Economy Monitoring Group.

#### **2. Educational Disadvantage**

Group on Women's Education Initiative  
Working Party on Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme  
Committee on the Establishment of an Education Bank  
National Steering Committee on Home School  
Committee on Early School Learning  
Action Group on Retention Rates  
Policy Advisory Committee on Long-Term Unemployment and Educational Disadvantage

3. **Youth & Drugs**
  - National Drugs Strategy Policy Group
  - Assessment Committee for Young People's Facilities and Services Fund
  - National Aids Strategy Committee
  - National Consultative Committee on Health Promotion
  - Department of Education & Science Working Group on Youth Services
  - National Drugs Strategy Assessment Committee
  - National Co-ordinating Committee for European Drug Prevention Week.
4. **Equality / Disability**
  - Inter-Departmental Transport Accessibility Committee
  - Inter-Departmental Task Force on the Implementation of the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities
  - Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Rights
  - Inter-Departmental Committee on an Integrated Social Services System
  - Social Services Integration Committee
  - Review of Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concession) Regulations
  - Liaison Group on Operational Issues relating to Asylum Seekers
  - Inter-Departmental Committee on Asylum Seekers
  - Advisory Board on Youth Action against Racism and Discrimination
  - National Council on Ageing and Older People
5. **Income Adequacy**
  - Inter-Departmental Committee on issues arising in the transfer of Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme from health Boards to Local Authorities
  - Money Advice and Budgeting Service National Advisory Committee
  - Working Group to examine the Treatment of Married, Cohabiting and One-Parent Households under the Tax and Welfare Codes
  - Steering Group on Secondary Social Welfare Benefits
6. **Travellers, Homelessness and Housing**
  - Housing Management Group
  - National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Group
  - Inter-Departmental Housing Committee
  - Committee on Traveller Youth Initiative
  - Co-ordinating Committee on Traveller Education.
7. **Childcare**
  - Childcare Synergies Group
  - Monitoring Group for Pilot Projects for Children at Risk
  - Assessment Committee on Pilot Projects for Children at Risk
  - National Youthwork Advisory Committee
  - Integrated Delivery of Childcare Services
  - Working Group on Implementation of Pre-school Services Regulations.
8. **Local / Community Development**
  - Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on Local Development
  - Integrated Services Project Steering Committee
  - Steering Committee on White Paper on Voluntary and Community Sector and its relationship with the State
  - Community Development Programme National Advisory Committee
  - Community Development Programme Technical Group
  - Area Development Management Liaison Committee (Department of Education and Science)
  - Steering Committee on White Paper on Rural Development and Rural Renewal.
9. **Others**
  - 'Copping On' - Crime Awareness Initiative Steering Committee
  - Committee on Services to Marriages in Difficulties
  - Pensions Board Committee
  - Inter-Departmental Working Group on Tax Relief for Carers

Commission on Public Service Pensions  
Tax Strategy Group  
Inter-Departmental Group on Emigration  
Inter-Departmental Group on the Electronic Transmission of Documents  
Inter-Departmental Committee on Islands, Rural Development and Irish Language.

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